

Howard Pyle
A Chronicle



CHARLES D. ABBOTT

Grace from Emma
Christmas 1925

Howard Pyle

A Chronicle



From
HOW THE DECLARATION WAS RECEIVED
IN THE OLD THIRTEEN
Harper's Magazine, 1892



THE MERMAID

*Painted by Howard Pyle in 1910
Now in the possession of Mrs. Howard Pyle
Here reproduced for the first time*



Howard Pyle

A Chronicle

*By Charles D. Abbott with
an Introduction by N.C. Wyeth
and Many Illustrations
from Howard Pyle's Works*



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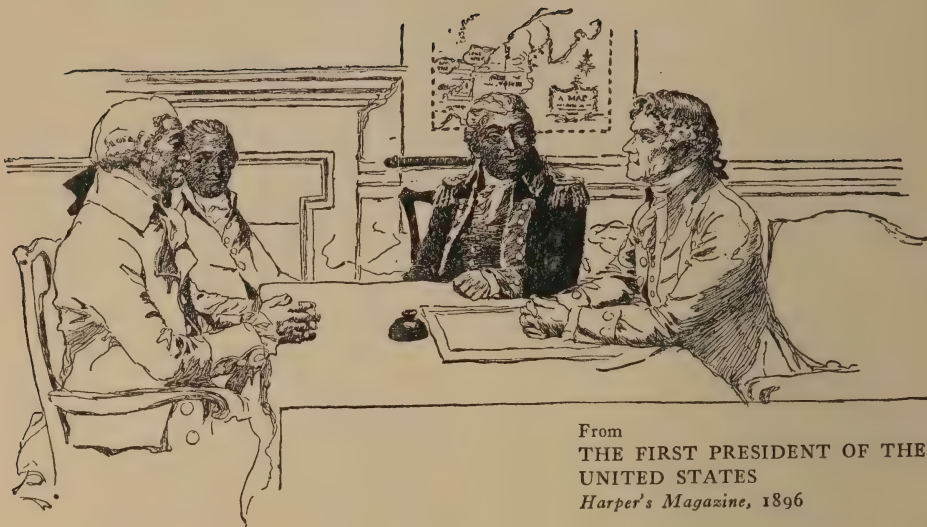
L-Z



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THE ONE HOSS SHAY
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TO

MRS. HOWARD PYLE



From
THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES
Harper's Magazine, 1896

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank Howard Pyle's many friends and pupils who have so regularly and so courteously been of assistance to him in the preparation of this work; and in particular he desires to express his grateful appreciation of the invaluable suggestions given to him by Mr. Walter S. Hinchman, Professor William Peterfield Trent, and Mrs. Charles G. Prettyman. The thoughtful coöperation of the various members of the artist's immediate family can never be adequately described or fully acknowledged.



From
HOW THE DECLARATION WAS
RECEIVED IN THE OLD THIRTEEN
Harper's Magazine, 1892

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Introduction

AS THE privilege of writing a foreword to the record of Howard Pyle's work has come to one of his pupils, the point of view cannot be other than that of student to master. Perhaps, after all, his great appeal as a man can be better revealed from this exceptional and intimate relationship; and, as an artist must be greater than his works, so, it seems to me, the humblest efforts to tell of the man are to some purpose.

I am hardly the one to write of the tremendous impulse Howard Pyle gave to the improvement of magazine and book illustration, or of his intense earnestness and enormous success in emerging from the slackwater period in art which came at the end of the Victorian era—a period singularly stagnant in the field of graphic expression. With what energy and courage he pushed forward, almost alone, pouring into his hundreds of illustrations such sincerity and enthusiasm, such dramatic force, that the world of cultivation paused to look upon and applaud his efforts.

Meanwhile, his astonishing fertility of imagination and unequalled energy were producing written story after story for young readers, books which have since become juvenile classics: *The Wonder Clock*, *Pepper and Salt*, several rich volumes dealing with King Arthur and his knights, and his now famous *Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*, recognized in England today as the supreme modern interpretation in words and pictures of their beloved legend—these

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and many other volumes, of adventures with pirates, of excursions into the mystic land of souls and symbols, and even the daring, realistic fantasy dealing with the return of Christ in modern times. Within the covers of certain of these books are preserved Pyle's most important contributions to the world of art. I refer particularly to the pen drawings which adorn the pages of the Arthurian legends.

One wonders at and delights in his tone drawings and paintings in color, especially those depicting Colonial life. One marvels at the felicitous display of intimate knowledge of that remote period, and one is thrilled again and again by the masterfully dramatic presentation of incidents. All this is true, but for abstract beauty, character, and the compelling force of decorative craftsmanship (three enduring virtues in art) Howard Pyle's pen drawings represent his highest artistic achievement. They stand with the greatest works of all time done in this medium.

But Howard Pyle the man towers above his best efforts, and it is of the man that I feel more competent to speak.

A great stick of hickory is smoldering and gleaming in the fireplace before me. Its pungent fragrance scents the room. My pulse quickens to the magic aroma and my thought flies back to a day in October, eighteen years ago, when I first saw Howard Pyle. He was standing, tall, broad, and impressive, legs apart, hands clasped behind him, backed against another such open fire in his studio. The smell of burning hickory was in the air.

I had come to him, as many had before me, for his help and guidance, and his first words to me will forever ring in my ears as an unceasing appeal to my conscience: "My boy, you have come here for help. Then you must live

your best, and work hard!" His broad, kindly face looked solemn as he spoke those words, and from that moment I knew that he meant infinitely more to me than a mere teacher of illustration. It was this commanding spirit of earnestness and of love that made his leadership distinctive, and which has perpetuated in the hearts of all his pupils a deep affection akin to that which one holds toward his own parents.

Who of his associates (and, after all, we were associates as well as students) can forget the somber hours in the gloaming, when, after a hard day's work before our easels, we sat in the class studio, watching with blissful content the fading square patch of the skylight, warm with the light of the afterglow, violet, then a dim, dusty gray? Who of us has not thrilled in these moments, when suddenly we heard the dull jar of the master's door, the slight after-rattle of the brass knocker as it closed, and the faint sound of his footsteps on the brick walk? And then, as we had hoped, our own door was opened and he entered in the dim light and sat among us.

I can see him now, the soft overhead light faintly modeling his large, generous features, his massive forehead and deep-set eyes, the breadth between the eyes and the prominent cheek bones. Breaking the tense silence, he would talk in a soft, hushed voice, of art, its relation to life, his aspirations, his aspirations for us. Only too soon he would say good-night and leave us in the darkness, and, as we felt for our hats and coats, each one knew that every jaw was set to do better in life and work and in some measure to express our deep gratitude to the one who had inspired us.

There are many in this world who radiate the feeling of love and earnestness of purpose, but who have not the faculty or power to impart the rudiments of accomplishment. There is nothing in this world that will inspire the purpose of youth like the combined strength of spirituality and practical assistance. It gives the young student a definite clew, as it were, to the usefulness of being upright and earnest. Howard Pyle abounded in this power and lavished it upon all who were serious.

It seemed almost miraculous as we watched week by week the rapid unfolding of a new member (to our unpracticed thought, however, hopelessly crude and unpromising). One could mark the distinct advances in his efforts. Wretched, unstable drawing would quickly assume coherent shape and character; raw and uncouth conceptions would develop and become softened and refined, until in a marvelously short time the student would find himself, and emerge upon that elevation of thinking and feeling which would disclose before him a limitless horizon of possibilities.

Howard Pyle's extraordinary ability as a teacher lay primarily in his penetration. He could read beneath the crude lines on paper the true purpose, detect therein our real inclinations and impulses; in short, unlock our personalities. This power was in no wise a superficial method handed out to those who would receive. We received in proportion to that which was fundamentally within us.

I recall an instance. One member, an ungainly lad from the back country of northern New England, found his way into the Pyle classes. He had dreamed, in his remote village, of becoming an artist; of picturing his visions of

cities he had never seen, and of the lives of the people therein. He had come into the composition class week after week with sketches of society folk and kindred subjects. They were, naturally, unconvincing and poor, but the master's interest in them did not flag. Meanwhile, he assiduously gathered from the fellow accounts of his life in the north woods, of breaking snow-roads, of gathering maple-sap, of log-driving, of corn-husking. It began to dawn upon the Vermonter that his own life at home, the incidents of his own north country, which he knew and loved, were interesting. His pictures gained in vitality and importance. He had found himself.

I doubt if Howard Pyle ever had a student who did not at some time or other experience some such awakening as this while under his direction.

I can recall many instances of his generous interest and boyish enthusiasm which have made us all the richer. We spent days with him rummaging around old furniture shops, hunting for seasoned mahogany for panels to paint upon, and we spent very much more time with him roaming the gorgeous hills and woods of the Brandywine valley at Chadds Ford.

It was the time spent with him in this remote Pennsylvania village that brings the fondest memories to most of us. I have the keenest and most enjoyable remembrances of him, surrounded by his wife and family of six children, in a large, roomy house that nestled in the trees beneath a great hill, within a stone's throw of General Lafayette's Headquarters. Many jolly evenings did we spend before his crackling log fires, eating nuts, telling stories, or, best of all, listening to his reminiscences, or stories from his

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full store of knowledge of history and of people. His intimacy with Colonial history and his sympathetic and authentic translations of those times into pictures are known and loved the world over.

Thus to know Howard Pyle—in this country of all countries, where Washington had fought, where from the spacious veranda we looked across the meadows upon Rocky Hill, the very location of the deciding conflict that sent Washington and his men to their memorable winter at Valley Forge—to know Howard Pyle here was a profound privilege. His accurate knowledge of the Battle of the Brandywine; his vivid word pictures of marches and counter-marches, skirmishes and retreats; his anecdotes of the very families who had seen the running fight; the tales told him by his great-grandmother, who distinctly remembered the retreating Continentals, trailing their muskets over the dry fields of September, their shoeless bleeding feet wrapped in gunny-sack—these, and a thousand other things. Enthusiastic, generous, with a marvelous knowledge of events and a rich and versatile imagination, can you wonder that we loved him?

How can I tell in words the life of the thirty or more who lived in these historic, picturesque, rolling hills, working in the spacious and grain-scented rooms of an old grist-mill? To recall the unceasing, soft rush of the water as it flowed over the huge, silent wheel beneath us thrills me through. I loved it. And here the teacher kept his class intact for five glorious summers. Who of us does not count those as golden days?

As we are slowly maturing into the various and independent ways of arriving at the solution of our personal

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viewpoint in art, we may feel at times a little impatient that we are not more individual, and that we have inherited a little too much from Howard Pyle that does not by right belong to us. But even so, it is likely that he awakened in many of us ennobling visions which without his golden touch might have always slept.

N. C. WYETH

CHADDS FORD

PENNSYLVANIA

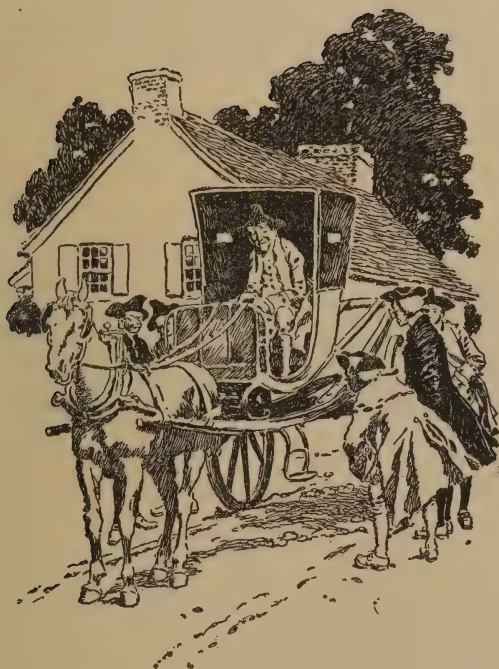
JUNE, 1925



From
TOM CHIST AND THE TREASURE BOX
Harper's Round Table, 1896

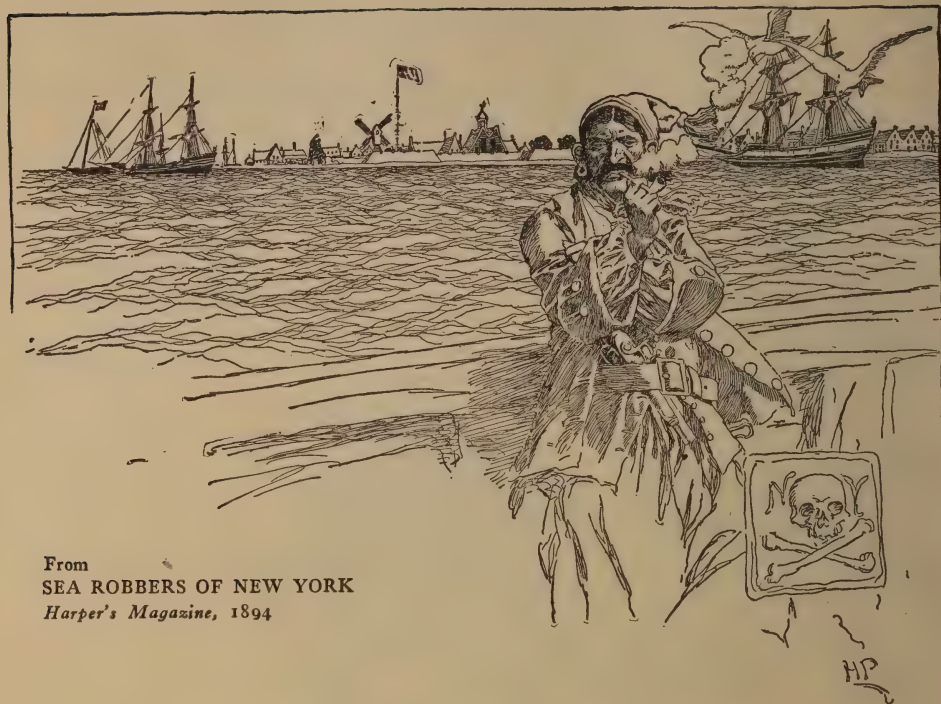
Howard Pyle

A Chronicle



Pyle

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From
SEA ROBBERS OF NEW YORK
Harper's Magazine, 1894

HOWARD PYLE

A Chronicle

CHAPTER I

WILMINGTON, QUAKERS, AND YOUTHFUL AMBITIONS

*W*ILMINGTON in the sixth and seventh decades of the last century was an enterprising city, vigorous in its manufacturing interests, strong in its leadership of an advancing state, and happy in its location in the midst of a rich and prosperous farming district. It was an old settlement, far older than its northern neighbor, Philadelphia; the town of Christiania from which Wilmington developed had been settled by the Swedes in 1638. But the Swedish colony had undergone many changes. It had from time to time been overrun by the Dutch from New York, who, remembering the unfortunate expedition of De Vries, claimed prior possession. The English, also, after their acquisition of New York, had put in an active appearance now and then. After this period of change Wilmington had had its renaissance shortly after the good ship *Welcome* sailed up the Delaware in 1682, bringing with it a band of people imbued not only with the religious calmness and philosophy of George Fox, but also with the civic spirit and idealism of William Penn. The Quakers soon spread over most of southern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware, and the old

Swedish background of Wilmington was slowly absorbed into the new orderliness of the Friends. From that time the colony developed steadily; its Quaker population took as active a part in the separation from England as its religious tenets would permit, and Delaware was the first state to recognize the worth of the Constitution.

After the strenuous times of the Revolution and after the final settling of things to something like quietude, there was a general increase in literary and artistic interest among these people. The Quakers, educated for generations, read nearly all the prevalent literature of the day. They were absorbed in the radical movements of the time; Wilmington was a hotbed of anti-slaveryism. Liberalism was the natural result of the uninterrupted development of Quaker culture. Further, the desire for intellectual advance made the people unusually receptive to spiritualism and all the other *isms* of the day—often leading whole communities of advanced Friends into rambling fields of aimless speculation. This spirit of mental curiosity also tended to develop men and women possessing remarkable broad-mindedness, remarkable literary and artistic vision. Among others it evolved Bayard Taylor, a member of the same family which was later to produce Howard Pyle.

It was into such a state of society that Howard Pyle was born on March 5, 1853. He was sprung on both sides of the family from old Quaker stock, some of his forbears being among those who came over originally in the *Welcome*. Both his father, William Pyle, and his mother, Margaret Churchman Pyle, were persons of unusual culture; both were vital influences throughout his early development. His mother, in particular, was an eager spirit,

always in quest of the beautiful and the interesting. She was a leader in the intellectual life of the city and was always one of the prime movers in the reforms of the day, social and otherwise. She had had the keenest desire to fulfill her own dreams of a literary and artistic career, and when this had become an impossibility, she had passed on her desire to her children, encouraging and leading them on with the broadest and most perfect sympathy. The doctrines of Swedenborg were permeating the community, and Mrs. Pyle was soon interested in them. The beautiful mysticism of these new ideas appealed strongly to one who had always been of a mystically poetic temperament, and who had always accepted, without equivocation, the spiritual side of the doctrines of the Friends. She trained her children in the paths of Swedenborg and instilled in them a permanent interest in the indefinably mystic. But her influence was even more important in another way—she possessed a most cultivated taste in literature, and she kept continually before her children the books which appealed to her. Her own enthusiasms were easily transmitted to them. At a very early age they were absorbed in reading, or in having read to them, not only such favorites as *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Robinson Crusoe*, but the novels of Dickens and Thackeray. Moreover, she had kept from childhood a lively fondness for fairy tales, and these, in particular, she introduced to her children. From this early training, Howard undoubtedly drew much of the inspiration for his later work. Nothing could have been more fortunate for him than the possession of such a mother.

It is even possible to trace back the interest in illustration to these days of his mother's influence. He once wrote:

"My mother was very fond of pictures in books. A number of prints hung on the walls of our house: there were engravings of Landseer and Holman Hunt's pictures, and there was a colored engraving of Murillo's *Madonna* standing balanced on the crescent moon, and there was pretty smiling Beatrice Cenci, and several others that were thought to be good pictures in those days. But we—my mother and I—liked the pictures in the books the best of all. I may say to you in confidence that even to this very day I still like the pictures you find in books better than wall pictures. . . .

"I can remember many and many an hour in which I lay stretched out before the fire upon the rug in the snug, warm little library, whilst the hickory logs snapped and crackled in the fireplace, and the firelight twinkled on the andirons, and the snow, maybe, was softly falling outside, covering all the far-away fields with a blanket of white,—many and many an hour do I remember lying thus, turning over leaf after leaf of those English papers [*Punch* and the *Illustrated London News*], or of that dear old volume of *The Newcomes* (the one with the fables on the title page), or of *The Old Curiosity Shop* where you may see the picture of Master Humphrey with the dream people flying about his head. So looking at the pictures, my mother, busy with the work on her lap, would tell me the story that belonged to each.

"Thus it was that my mother taught me to like books and pictures, and I cannot remember the time when I did not like them; so that time, perhaps, was the beginning of that taste that led me to do the work I am now doing."¹

¹ "When I Was a Little Boy," *Woman's Home Companion*, April, 1912, xxxix, p. 5.

During these early days the family—there were, at that time, two other sons, Clifford and Walter, who were both younger than Howard (a daughter, Katherine, was born somewhat later)—lived just outside the city. In Howard's own words, “. . . The house . . . was the quaintest, dearest old place you can imagine. It was built of stone, and there were really three houses joined together.

“There was an old part built about 1740, I think. Standing against that was another part built about 1780, and then my father built an addition that stood against the 1780 part of the house, so when you went from one of these parts to another, you had to go up one step and down another.

“In front of the house was a grassy lawn with a terraced bank (I used to roll over and over down that bank in the soft, warm grass on a summer's day), and there was a little grove, or park of trees, to one side, and beyond you could see the turnpike road. I remember that every now and then there would be a train of Conestoga wagons that would pass along the highroad in a great cloud of dust, carrying lime from Lancaster County in Pennsylvania to the neighboring town for export. These big wagons were always very wonderful to me. They looked like great clumsy ships that had come from afar, and sometimes the leading team of eight mules, bedecked with gay harness trimmed with crimson leather and brass, were adorned with silver bells that rang a merry tune as they passed along the highway.

“On the other side of the house to a little distance was a garden of old, old-fashioned roses and sweet shrubs that filled the air with fragrance when they were abloom. And there were beds of tulips and daffodillies, and there were

gravelled walks edged with box, and a greenhouse of shining glass at the lower end of the garden. And there was a wooden summer-house at the end of one of the gravel walks, and altogether it was such a garden as you would hardly find outside of a story book. It seems to me that when I think of that garden I cannot remember anything but bloom and beauty, air filled with the odor of growing things, and birds singing in the shady trees in such a fashion as they do not sing nowadays. . . . ”¹

Even in these very early days, Howard was beginning to show signs of the interest which was later to develop into his profession. He tells a quaint little story of himself, showing how his mother's influence and the spirit of the household were already at work.

“ . . . There was a great rock by the garden wall where there were ferns and ivy. I remember one time—I think it was springtime, and I know that the afternoon sun was bright and warm—I was inspired to write a poem. My mother gave me some gilt-edged paper and a lead pencil, and I went out to this rock where I might be alone with my inspiration and purpose. It was not until I had wet my pencil point in my mouth, and was ready to begin my composition, that I realized that I was not able to read or write. I shall never forget how helpless and impotent I felt. . . . ”¹

But these days of idyllic beauty could not last. The financial affairs of the family were suffering, as did those of so many families at the time, from the effects of the war on

¹ “When I Was a Little Boy,” *Woman's Home Companion*, April, 1912, vol. xxxix, p. 5.

business conditions, and the picturesque house in the country, with its antique garden, had to be given up. The removal into the city, however, was not without its advantages: here Mrs. Pyle was able to enter more fully into the intellectual activities which had always fascinated her; here there was an opportunity for more social intercourse; and here the children saw more of the active life of the times. The war was in full swing; Wilmington was busy; troops were continually pouring through to Virginia from New England; soldiers in long trains would stop in the old station, and the people—Wilmington was thoroughly with the North in sympathy—would cheer them on. The spirit was contagious; it had its effect on the impressionable mind of Howard Pyle. He carried through life a vivid interest in all things connected with the Civil War—an interest that spread to all other phases of his country's history. He himself describes one of his first pictorial ventures into the field:

“ . . . For many years I had an original picture, drawn by myself and tinted with water color (I was eight years old when I made it), representing a bandy-legged zouave waving a flag and brandishing a sword as he threatened a wretched Confederate with annihilation. There were lots of smoke and bombshells in the picture, and a blazing cannon and an array of muskets and bayonets passing behind a hill, so that you would not have to draw all the soldiers who carried them. Accompanying this picture was a legend telling how the cannon-thunder roars, how the sword flashes in the air and falls upon the enemy of the nation. The text, I remember, concluded with these words, ‘Ded! Ded! Ded

is the cesioner!' (Secessionist! I was never a good hand at spelling)."¹

Since Howard was now old enough to gain something by a little study, his parents sent him to school—first, to the old Friends' School, and then to Clark and Taylor's. Here by his own confession he was far more interested in drawing pictures on his slate or in the margins of his books, than he was in the intricacies of grammar or arithmetic. He continued to go for a number of years, but the training received at the hands of his mother during these same years was to prove far more valuable than that given by schools. One of the books to which his mother introduced him during this period was Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, which gave him a vigorous interest in Robin Hood, and which was soon followed by Ritson's charming old collection of popular ballads that centered around the life of England's outlaw hero. From these early introductions was to spring one of the best of children's books some twenty years later. Other literature was occupying his attention—Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and many collections of German folk and fairy tales—and through it all his pencil was seldom still. Rough, crude sketches surrounded the family on all sides.

He was not to any considerable extent a sociable boy. While he joined in the play of his school companions, and was popular in a way among them, he was far easier when off by himself, sketching away with some romantic idea in his head, or when peacefully sitting at home happily intent on some tale of the Middle Ages. These signs of

¹ "When I Was a Little Boy," *Woman's Home Companion*, April, 1912, vol. xxxix, p. 5.

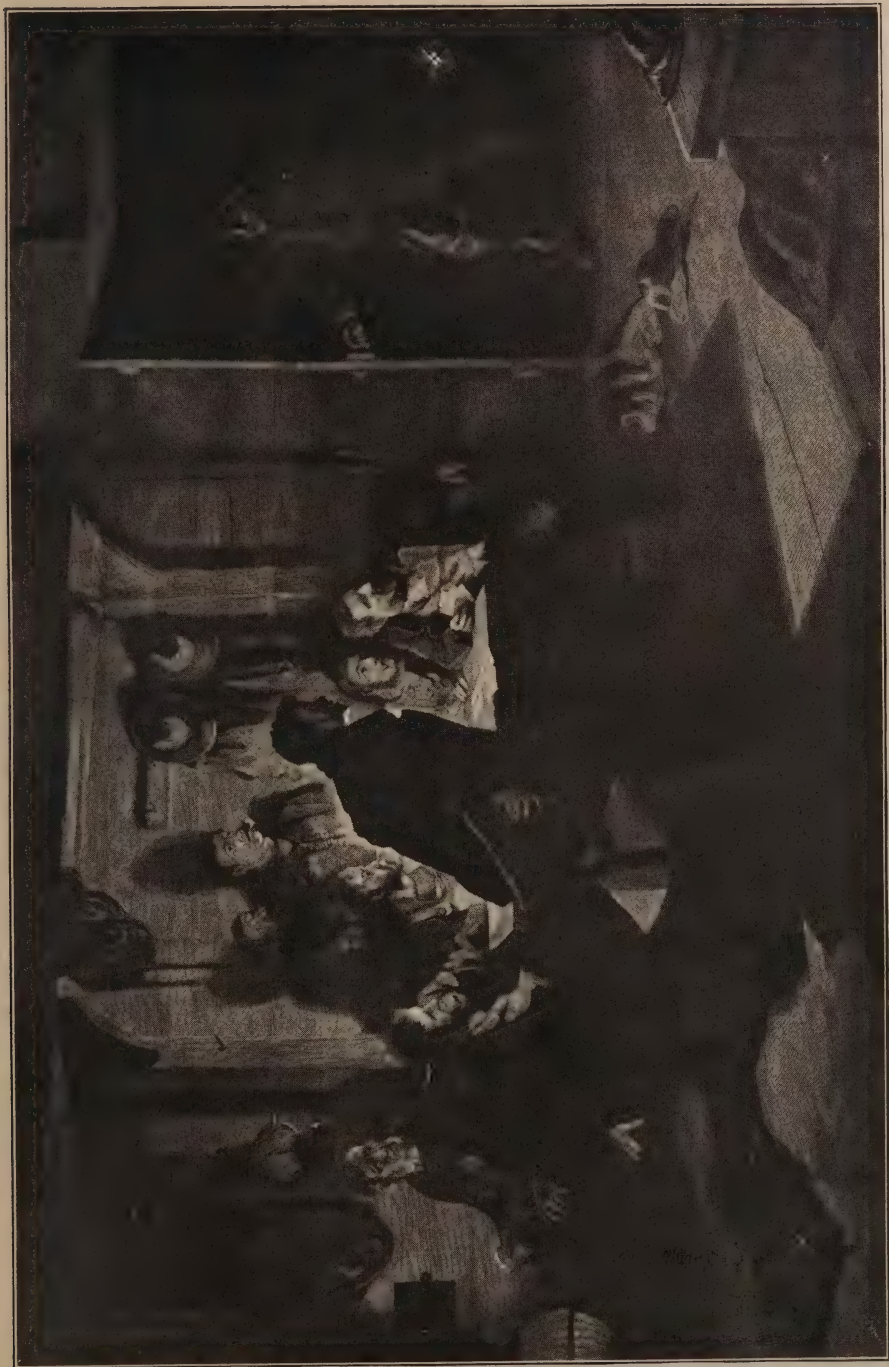
a distinctive personality did not discourage or alarm his family, as they are so likely to do among more conventional people. His mother had visions of her son fulfilling the dreams which she had had in her own childhood and youth, and was overjoyed that he was giving such manifestations of promise. He was allowed to sketch and to scribble away—for he wanted to write as well as to draw—as much as he pleased, and his mother was always ready to make suggestions and to criticize whatever he produced. Who would deny that such patience and such sympathy on the part of the mother had an incomparable effect on the development of the impulses already strong in the child? Of course, there were moments when more typically boyish ambitions stirred within him. There was a decided thrill in watching the locomotives come rushing through on the old Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad, and he dreamed of the glories of being a train engineer. And those delightful years in the country had given a glamour to that sort of life, that made him occasionally look forward to being a farmer. This last may, perhaps, have been merely a result of family habit, for his ancestors had been for many generations farmers in the peaceful Pennsylvania and Delaware hills. Always, however, he came back to the continual sketching; there was scarcely ever a break of any considerable length of time.

Punch continued to be one of the principal reading supplies of the family. In his later letters, Howard speaks again and again of the pictures by Leech and Doyle and Tenniel, and the essays by Thackeray and Douglas Jerrold. These had an immeasurable influence on his work, especially that of his earliest period. It was at this time

that he absorbed the spirit and purpose of those hearty Englishmen. And the illustrated books continued to delight him. *Barnaby Rudge*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *The Newcomes*, read again and again, made a deep impression on his plastic mind and remained favorites during the rest of his life.

When Howard was about fifteen or sixteen years old, his parents decided that it would be best to send him to college. Then there followed a weary time of preparation. Through many hours of Latin and algebra he was joyously uninterested. What did college mean to a youth who was more anxious to learn how to get a certain shady effect in the background of a pen-and-ink sketch, than he was in knowing what Cicero said in support of the Manilian Law? The parents struggled, and Howard remained unmoved and unconvinced. Mrs. Pyle felt that college would not harm his talent for drawing and that it might decidedly improve his literary instincts. But the struggle was in vain. She had to surrender at last, and Howard was permitted to go on with his drawing and scribbling—doing, perhaps, the very best thing for the strengthening of his imagination. Might not college have left an unfortunate and indelible sophistication on the mind that was to create the *Wonder Clock*?

Study with one's self, no matter how excellent it may be for a time, cannot go on forever without ending in a kind of futility. This was the opinion of the Pyle family when Howard had finally committed himself to a life of artistic endeavor. The pecuniary circumstances of the family were somewhat straitened at the time, and it was idle to dream of sending the boy off to Europe to study with Gérôme in



"WRECK IN THE OFFING!"
Harper's Weekly, 1878

Paris or Piloty in Munich. Besides, he had not been sufficiently trained in academic methods. Then, also, Americans were not so much in the habit of rushing off to Europe to find an art education as they are in these days. Still, it was obviously necessary for Howard to study somewhere, and Philadelphia seemed to present the greatest opportunities. There were two schools there where the young artist might conceivably do his work—the Academy of Fine Arts, where careful instruction could be obtained along general classical lines, and a little private school where a certain Mr. Van der Weilen conducted a small class. It was decided that Howard should go to the second of these. Had he gone to the Academy, he would unquestionably have met and been familiar with a young man, Edwin Austen Abbey, who was studying there at the time and who was later to be, for a short period, a companion and fellow worker with him. The advantages of being in a small class, however, where each pupil would receive a great deal of attention from Mr. Van der Weilen himself, outweighed all other arguments, and Howard became a regular student, commuting back and forth from Wilmington to Philadelphia. This was a great and momentous step; it crystallized into more certain form the ambitions which had been more or less inchoate before. He felt himself committed to a certain walk of life, and there is no question that he was satisfied with his choice.

Mr. Van der Weilen had graduated from the school at Antwerp with high honors, but in pursuing his studies too zealously had committed an irreparable injury to his eyesight. He had been left in such a condition that it was impossible for him to think of doing any considerable

amount of original work himself, yet he could see sufficiently well to be of inestimable service to those pupils who were placed with him. With all the advantages of a European training, with a full knowledge of the most accepted technique, he combined a real teaching skill, making every effort to cultivate and improve the imaginations of the young men who were in his class. But it was a stiff course of study that he prescribed; it was hard, almost never-ending work. There was slight opportunity for dreaming or building castles in the air. He was always there, always vigorously insisting upon a close attention to the matter in hand, and the consequence was that his pupils—at least one of them—thought at the time that such work was drudgery. The taskmaster, however, was too efficient to allow such feelings to interfere with the regular routine. He kept them busily at their sketching and painting, and succeeded magnificently in giving them a technique.

Howard continued his Philadelphia trips for three years, during which time he gathered a great deal of knowledge from the persistent teaching of Mr. Van der Weilen. This was the only systematic training that he ever had, for his later work at the Art Students' League was certainly too disconnected to be of the greatest value.

The Wilmington life went on. Sketching and scribbling could be done in the spare hours when there was nothing to do for Mr. Van der Weilen. And yet with it all Howard found time to help his father in the leather business which was not prospering too well in those panic-ridden early 'seventies. Mrs. Pyle continued to encourage her son, giving him the whole sympathy and power of her ardent spirit, never for a moment losing sight of the ambition which she

had for him. And there was no lack of good reading. Trollope had come into fashion, and had found loyal supporters among the members of the Pyle household. Carlyle was attempted but thrown down with something of disgust in the gesture. William Dean Howells was beginning to appear above the horizon with *Their Wedding Journey*, and *A Chance Acquaintance*. These Howard read with avidity; he took an unusual fancy to them, especially to the style in which they were written, and he conceived an intense admiration for Howells, which was later to ripen into a rich friendship. And there were discussions in the Pyle family, open-minded discussions in which such subjects as Darwinism were carefully weighed pro and con, while spiritualism and even metaphysics, not to mention Swedenborg, were topics of absorbing interest.

But after the "Van der Weilian course of sprouts," as Howard called his Philadelphia experiences, was over, there began to be a waning in the young artist's dreams of a career. He was working almost steadily in the leather establishment, and was heavily occupied not only with business but also with a variety of social activities. Wilmington was a gay little city and there were many affairs which attracted him. There was plenty to do in Wilmington, and he was happy. He began to look upon his earlier ambitions as things of the past; he was occupied more with things of the present. Yet the creative urge was strong within, even if it did find its outlet in a desultory fashion. He spent numerous spare hours in composing rippling ballads, and in constructing short stories; he drew sketches to illustrate them and then usually destroyed them since they failed to measure up to his expectations. His

artistic impulses were still strong, and growing stronger every day, but his ambition was almost dead. He needed a great awakening, and it came in the fall of 1876.

In the spring of that year he had gone on an expedition to a little island off the coast of Virginia known as Chincoteague, where there flourished a breed of wild ponies. He was there at the time when the owners penned and branded these horses, and was very greatly interested in the operation. He watched it all in detail—how the horses were caught, how the branding was accomplished—and he especially took notice of the people who did it. He grasped their personalities, learned all about them, caught the spirit of the local atmosphere. Then, when he returned to Wilmington, he wrote about it and made sketches to go with his essay. It was a good description. It showed a real knowledge of the little island and a splendid grasp of the picturesque details. Mrs. Pyle immediately saw its value and advised him to send it off to *Scribner's Monthly*, which was in the habit of publishing such things. He had also written, not long before, a little poem entitled "The Magic Pill." It was a slight piece, rather after the manner of Oliver Wendell Holmes, but it was in creditable verse and was characterized by a somewhat novel idea. Moreover, the picture that he had drawn for it was very good, and went with the verses most fittingly. Both these were sent off to *Scribner's* at once. And immediately the old ambitions began to burst forth anew and with added vigor.

It was not long before a pleasant little note came from *Scribner's Monthly* saying that both had been accepted—the poem for the Bric-à-brac section and the article for the body of the magazine. The editors were particularly

pleased with the illustrations, although the ones for "Chinco-teague" would have to be redrawn by their own staff of artists in order to be made suitable for purposes of reproduction. The Pyle family was delighted; everything began to look rosy for Howard. Then Mr. Roswell Smith, who was one of the owners of *Scribner's Monthly*, got into communication with Mr. Pyle and learned all the details about Howard. He advised that the young man come to New York, spend all his time in drawing and writing for the magazines, and develop his abilities until they should become of really great value. He implied that there would be no difficulty in getting plenty of work from *Scribner's*, and succeeded in persuading Mr. Pyle that nothing would be easier than for Howard to make a good living.

Of course, Howard himself, with his old fires rekindled by this sudden success, was not at all averse to plunging into the hurly-burly of New York. It was an opportunity not to be missed. Not only could he get a good start in the way of practical work for the periodicals, but he could also study again. There would be any number of good teachers there, and he could surely spare enough time from his work to be trained in the latest methods that had been brought over from Europe. Mrs. Pyle was a perfect mother in her devotion. She was deeply moved at the thought of her son's being alone in the great metropolis; she would have loved to have him always in Wilmington, but his career was uppermost in her mind. Nothing would matter so long as her son became an artist and thus fulfilled her own dreams. Mr. Pyle's circumstances, considerably reduced since the early days, could not permit of any great drains, but, nevertheless, it was decided that if Howard found it

difficult to make his way at first, he should be supported from the family purse. Accordingly, then, about the middle of October, 1876, he set out for New York, carrying with him the high hopes of his family and the glad confidence of young ambition.

CHAPTER II

THE CRUCIBLE OF NEW YORK

*T*HE first thing to look for in New York was a place to board—not too expensive a place, for the income of a young artist could not easily be made to support one in luxurious surroundings. Howard knew very little of the city; he hadn't the remotest idea where the so-called art centers were. Had he known where other people who were following his profession lived, he would undoubtedly have sought a harbor somewhere in that vicinity. But it was all new and strange; he thought merely of finding a comfortable boarding-house, not too far from the offices of *Scribner's* and the other magazines, where he could work without interruption. But such a place was not easy to find. The nearer the prospective dwelling was to the offices, the higher price one had to pay for the privilege of living there. After considerable searching he finally found on Forty-eighth Street a vacant room in a boarding-house which was managed by two middle-aged ladies, the Misses Marshall. The odd thing about it was that these two women were former neighbors of his mother's. They immediately took a fancy to the young man and saw to it that he was well supplied with the usual appurtenances of boarding-houses. Even under such pleasant conditions, however, Forty-eighth Street was not exactly an ideal place for an artist to live in those days—too many hours had to

be occupied with walking down town to the much-frequented centers of the publishing business.

As soon as he was settled in his new quarters, he began to attend the theaters. Good plays had been something of a rarity in Wilmington, but in New York the drama was moving towards a new importance, and the playhouses were taking on the brilliance that characterizes them today. His letters home are full of allusions to the various productions which he saw—he evidently was greatly impressed with the possibilities of the stage.

He worked regularly either at short stories and fables or at the illustrations to go with them, and for a time he had little difficulty in getting them accepted. Mary Mapes Dodge, who was then the editor of *St. Nicholas*, saw a certain charm in the animal fables which he was continually pouring out, and published a number of them. In spite of the certainty, however, with which Mr. Smith had told Mr. Pyle that *Scribner's* would find plenty of work for Howard to do, it was not long before very little was forthcoming from that magazine. Still, this was no great matter to a young man of Howard's stamp—there were plenty of other periodicals. In fact it was probably in the end a very lucky occurrence, for it threw him on his own initiative and made him fight his own battles. As he himself wrote many years later, "I took him [Mr. Smith] at his word and went there expecting to find employment with *Scribner's*. Fortunately for me, I found that I had to make my own way, and that it was not made for me by *Scribner's*."¹ But Mr. Smith himself was most kind and sympathetic. He did everything he could in a personal

¹ The Scrapbook, in possession of Mrs. Howard Pyle.



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way—criticized manuscripts, gave extremely valuable advice, and even offered to get Howard a place in the choir of his church. Howard finally refused this last, since he was not inclined to accept money for singing in church; there seemed to him to be something of hypocrisy in such an acceptance. He took advantage, however, of all the social opportunities which fell in his way. He made himself acquainted not only at the boarding-house, but also at the publishing offices, and soon had a circle of friends whom he had met in one place or the other.

During the early part of his years in New York he wrote diary-letters—many of them have been unfortunately lost—to his mother, which gave her full accounts of his activities every day. The letters draw such a vivid picture of these months that it seems best to quote from them those passages which describe his habits, his achievements, and his aspirations.

“New York,

“November 11, 1876.

“Worked all day yesterday in my room at my writing. I am trying to finish up that old story of mine without title, where Ephraim Marlowe tries to win Kitty Grant. It will have to be made over entirely new, and, to tell the truth, I feel at present somewhat blue as to the general result. Nothing, however, is gained without labour, and if Providence intends me to become a writer, it will all come in good time and with hard work. I can say one thing at least and that is that I am not *altogether* deficient in ideas.

“I went down at night to see Dion Boucicault in ‘The Shaughraun’ and was immensely entertained. I had al-

ways had the idea that Boucicault was a second- or third-rate actor; as Con, however, he is inimitable. Even excelling him, however, was Mr. Harry Beckett as Harvey Duff. The mean and villainous expression of the man was carried out wonderfully well. Where Corry Kinchela, the villain of the piece, instigates Harvey Duff to murder, Beckett's by-play is excellently good. The meditative scratching of the neck immediately below the left ear, the helpless, stupid glare of the eye, express very well the indecision of the stupid, ignorant, brute of a man; then as though wrenched from him comes the exclamation, 'Oh! Harvey Duff, ye divil! I wish ye were ought of this entirely.' All the parts, in short, were taken with an excellence that Wallack's Theatre knows so well how to produce—a dramatic feast—fit for the gods. I have always been used to seeing one star and the rest of the cast filled with minor players. These New York theatres open my eyes somewhat to the delights of the drama as produced by a *stock* company. . . .

"The election is not yet decided but probabilities are so much against Hayes, that I don't think now I would feel it very much were he finally declared defeated."

"November 12, 1876.

"Went down town yesterday morning to see Oliver Dyas and find out whether I could by some means obtain a pass to the theatres. Mr. Dyas said that only the theatrical critics were upon the free list, and that others upon the newspaper staffs bought such tickets as they needed. He advised me to set about making the acquaintance of some of the managers, saying that they are good fellows and

would doubtless any of them give me the entrée into their theatres without the slightest hesitation. It seems a very long course to take but I hope it will come about in time.

"The rest of the day I spent in writing, and in the evening went down to the Mercantile Library and got Howells's *A Foregone Conclusion*. It makes me feel blue when I read his style and then look at my own poor endeavors; the distance is so immeasurable that it makes me heartily discouraged. I wonder if the time will ever come when I will be able to do work somewhat to my satisfaction—I begin to think there's poor prospect."

"November 13, 1876.

"Yesterday afternoon passed without much note. I had intended going to Mr. Smith's church, Fifty-third Street and Fifth Avenue, but leaving it until too late I was compelled in consequence to attend the Swedenborgian. They are all very cordial and pleasant there, and speak to me with the utmost friendliness. Mr. Giles preached a wonderfully good sermon, fairly convincing, it seemed to me, two men directly in front of me, who had evidently come in in a skeptical mood, but in the end seemed deeply interested.

"I finished *A Foregone Conclusion* in the afternoon and wrote somewhat upon the manuscript I am engaged on. I know it is rather a wild venture, but it is at least excellent practice. I shall devote myself hereafter to the endeavor for something else beside money, for I see more and more clearly now that New York society expects one to give an equivalent return for the pleasures it grants.

"So Sunday passed without anything of note. I excused myself from attending Sunday school, for really I think it best that I should not undertake it until I am fairly settled down and feel able to spread my elbows in my new life; for such it is."

"November 14, 1876.

"I was at work all day yesterday in my room. Went down town in the afternoon returning *A Foregone Conclusion* and taking out in its place Moritz's *Mythology*. I shall probably complete the rewriting of my new piece today and shall then work up a new budget of fables for *St. Nicholas*. . . ."

"November 15, 1876.

"I completed the rewriting of that little story yesterday. I don't know how to class it in comparison with my other articles but one thing is certain, and that is that I have never written anything that has afforded me so much delight and interest in the writing as the last sheets of the little piece. I mean no false modesty, for in truth I do not doubt but that unbiassed judges would feel amused at the manifold crudities; but *they* haven't the affectionate interest that an author has in his own productions. I worked all day from half past eight in the morning and was so much interested that I could hardly tear myself away from it to go to dinner at half past six; and by half past nine in the evening had successfully accomplished that conclusion where the villain is finally overcome and the hero shines forth with victorious glory. However much of a failure it may turn out, however poor in literary qualities it may be,

it is with a sigh I close a task that has been, for a brief space, so delightful to myself.

"I shall lay aside such pleasures for a space and resume the task, not, however, unpleasant in itself, of writing up another budget of fables for Mrs. Dodge. The fables and their illustrations pay me not less than sixty dollars—the last brought me seventy-five. . . ."

"November 17, 1876.

"I went down to *Scribner's* yesterday to take my fables to Mrs. Dodge. There was, I believe, some little difficulty in regard to the blurring of the lines of my illustrations, since both the former and Mr. Drake, the Art Editor, suggested that I should go down and see the Photoengraving Company and obtain such suggestions as they might offer. I could not attend to it yesterday but shall today.

"I stopped in at Mr. Smith's to see if he could refer me to someone who would give me severe criticisms on my articles before I submitted them to the magazines; for I feel more and more acutely as time progresses and I begin to know enough to 'know how little I do know,' the need of severe advice in chopping off needless excrescences. Mr. Smith was more than kind. He cordially invited me to come up to his house for dinner and read my MS. to him and Mrs. Smith afterward, and he said that even were his criticisms useless in a literary sense, they would at least be *frank*. 'I know exactly what you want,' said he. 'What you desire is a friend. It's human nature as Christ himself has shown when He bade the disciples go forth two-by-two to preach His doctrine. You can rely upon one thing and that is that your articles will always be coddled by

Scribner's and *St. Nicholas*, and if there is a possibility of using them they will be accepted.'

"I went up to dinner at half past five but unfortunately leaving my visiting cards at home, I had a desperate race around to obtain some more, and at last had to write them myself. One might almost as well make a call without shoes and stockings as without visiting cards in New York. I was dreadfully afraid I would be late, but arrived just on time. Although it was a family dinner, yet they had five courses and two desserts, but I got through without drinking the water out of the finger bowl, because there wasn't any lemon in it, or cutting the butter with my table knife, because they didn't have any.

"I didn't get a chance to read my MS. to them after all, however, for Mrs. Smith had made an engagement to attend a lecture and had to leave soon after dinner. Mr. Smith begged me to leave the MS., however, which I did reluctantly enough, for it was only the rough sheets and filled with inaccuracies of writing and spelling, and was vilely written in such hieroglyphics that I very much doubt their ability to read it. . . .

"I had an engagement to visit Mr. Giles at nine o'clock, but spent the evening up to that time with Miss Smith, who did not go to the lecture, so pleasantly that I was really sorry when the time for leaving came. Miss Smith tried every argument to induce me to join their church, telling me how delightfully social it was and what pleasant and elegant people belonged, although not putting it quite so plainly as that. Great as the temptation was, however, I stood firm and shall *not* leave my own church, however



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much I might be tempted socially by such a course of action. . . .

"I have not done much in the money-making line this week, in fact nothing yet, though I intend to make another monkey picture, 'The Right Watch,' for Wood, and a caricature for *Harper's* or some of the comic papers. I have, however, written those fables for Mrs. Dodge which will probably bring me in something. Altogether, I will not net more than twenty dollars. Money seems to be growing beautifully less. I do not feel discouraged because I am sure that if I chose to devote myself entirely to making money I could make twice that much. Upon mature consideration I have concluded that a name is of inestimably more value than money. And I have enough, and more than enough, of that latter to keep me comfortably. . . . "

"November 18, 1876.

" . . . Thee strongly advised me in thy letter to stick to illustrating as my particular branch. I think thee is mistaken and that by all means a literary life is the proper one for me. Thee has not much confidence in my ability as a writer, nor have I much in myself, for I have not really turned my attention to it until within the past six months. But one thing I can say and that is that where there are hundreds—thousands—of artists who can do infinitely better and more creditable work than I can and succeed in their profession while the market is overstocked with pictures, I have not met anyone as young in years or letters as I am who has succeeded better or even as well as I have. I may make many failures at first and probably will, but it's in me and *shall* come out. I have, besides, now, the criticism of those

who, if they are not as good critics as thee, have yet been engaged so long upon journalism, that they know what are the essential qualities necessary in an article to render it popular with the public. . . .

"I went down to the Photoengraving Company yesterday and received many valuable hints in regard to pen drawing. I have commenced a picture, as much for practice as anything else, which I am going to submit to *St. Nicholas* if it turns out as I hope. It is 'Queen Mab.' She is flying through a gray evening sky on great dragon-fly wings; in front of her is a little elf, seated cross-legged on a bat and blowing a horn with all his might and main, and behind comes a troop of fantastic little elves with short tails and pointed caps. Below is a glooming valley and a glassy stream catching the reflection of a streak of lingering sunset.

In one corner is a flickering new moon, while the top of Queen Mab's wand forms a brilliant star. This is my intention if I can only carry it out. One could do a great deal if it weren't for that one word—'only.'"

"November 19, 1876.

"One suffers a great many take-downs in this world; so with me. My manuscript of 'Johan Printz' has been declined. I cannot say that I was very much disappointed, since I had pretty well concluded upon mature consideration that it was hardly up to standard. Mr. Gilder said that its chief fault was that it was hardly vividly enough imagined. He said that another great objection was that Henry James had written a ghost story for them, where, like mine, the house was burned.

"I may as well mention here . . . that I saw Mr. Smith

in regard to my other manuscript. It was very kind in him to offer to criticize it, which he did with great frankness. His criticism was much the same as theirs. He said that the characters were very well sketched and that it was written in a lively manner, but that the characters were commonplace and the conversation had nothing distinguished about it, but was just such as anyone would use. He said he would be very happy to examine any others of mine that I might desire to submit to him and was quite interested in reading this. . . .”

“November 20, 1876.

“It rained all day yesterday, and I, accordingly, stayed in my room, reading; having Hume’s *History of England* on hand, I have waded so far successfully through the early Britons, the Saxons, the Danes, and the Normans up to the time of Stephen. . . .”

“November 21, 1876.

“It rained in a most dismal manner all day yesterday and I remained at home working on the ‘Queen Mab’ picture. I was not at all satisfied with the result and accordingly commenced another which seems to be coming up infinitely better. I try to remember my own fable, *id est*, ‘Hasty completion spoils a work.’ . . .

“Miss Smith, making an engagement to go out riding next Friday morning with a lady friend, very kindly extended the invitation to me. The horse, she said, was not a very good hack, but he would go. I must say that I am rather alarmed at the prospect, when the animal is so ambiguously spoken of. Suppose he is one of those incarnate devils one hears of constantly, or a ‘bucker,’ a

'baulker' or a 'bolter.' I should cut rather a pretty spectacle, I don't think, in Central Park if such were the case. I rather think, upon the whole, I shall plan a 'business engagement' on Friday morning at ten o'clock."

"November 22, 1876.

"I received a letter from home yesterday morning telling me father was in town and would be at the Merchants'. I was working at the 'Queen Mab' picture all morning and with much better success than the first study I made for it. In fact it seems to me I am getting a rather good effect for me. I met father at noon and we had quite a pleasant little chat together after dinner. He seems quite anxious that I should be making money, and reiterated thy good advice to stick at drawing. I don't know whether it is best or not but it seems to me to be preferable to throw present prosperity into the great lottery of life, and who knows?—*some* man must draw the prize; at least it seems preferable to try for that thousandth chance, bitter as the disappointment attendant upon failure would be, than 'to fatten like the stall-fed ox' in present prosperity. Immediately after leaving father I returned home and continued paying attentions to Queen Mab.

"Look in the advertisement of *Scribner's Monthly*, for 1877, on one of the first advertising sheets of that periodical and among the list of Home Life and Travel and in an honorable position, behold 'An Unknown American Island'—that's me."

"November 23, 1876.

"Queen Mab, the hussy, jilted me at the last moment, and turned out to be a worthless creature after all. Should

I repine? My pride tells me 'no,' so I dismissed the young lady for the present by putting her in the portfolio in disgrace, and, having in the meantime received a note from Mrs. Dodge accepting all my fables but the 'Unwise Hen' and the 'King's Prime Ministers,' I went to work designing some illustrations.

"Mrs. Dodge especially requested me to design but one of them, but, so far from following her injunctions, I made a design of the discontented philosopher (as good a design as I have made lately) and two for the Bat, knowing my chance of having them accepted. I also wrote another fable to make up the half dozen in a budget; and struck in it a truer and broader sin of human nature than I have heretofore done, I think. A starving crow begs admission to a pigeon cote in the winter time and through compassion is admitted. The next year he brings three friends and coolly requests to have them quartered for the coming cold weather also. The next year he brings a whole flock and, turning the poor pigeons out, they take possession themselves. What one asks as a favor in the beginning is only too apt to be demanded as a right in the end. . . ."

"November 24, 1876.

"I took down my fable and illustrations to Mrs. Dodge yesterday morning, and, as I hoped, all the designs were accepted; she was very much pleased with the last fable. She gave me two designs to write for; one of them, two little birds fighting, is an illustration I think thee once wrote an accompanying story for to the *Little Messenger*. The other is a couple of nondescript birds of the stork species running a race. At present my ideas are in rather a chaotic

state, but I hope they will in time settle, and the small amount of useful common sense will, perhaps, precipitate to a tangible mass.

“Mr. Drake, the Art Editor, said Mr. Smith had been speaking to him about me, and wished him to throw every opportunity in my way for designing for them. Mr. Drake advised me to take a course of hard and thorough study from the very rudiments of drawing under a Mr. Wills, a German drawing teacher. I by no means incline to going through a Van der Weilian course of sprouts again, and very much doubt whether I shall undertake it. Mr. Drake wishes to see some of my former studies and accordingly I shall take down the ‘Venus de Medici’ and the ‘Soldier’s Head’ for him to inspect.

“I stopped in to see Mr. Smith and pleading a *business engagement* sent word that I could not have the pleasure of escorting Miss Julia to the Park. It is rather an inconvenient time of day, ten o’clock, but I think that that awful, uncertain horse had something to do with it. Mr. Smith asked me what day *would* suit me, and said Miss Julia would be happy to ride at any time. I avoided the question in a cowardly manner by saying that I had better consult *her* about that.

“I received thy letter in the evening and was very much interested. I think Katie is doing *wonderfully* well but don’t tell her I say so, for I think it would be better even to speak slightly of her verses than to praise them unduly. It would be the greatest misfortune to her should she once become *satisfied* with her work. I shall show them to Mrs. Dodge and see what she thinks of them, for I think they are rather remarkable for a child of



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her age. Do, by all means, keep her in strict harness, though . . .

"Says Mr. Drake, the art editor, 'If you are going to try to make an artist sufficiently good to illustrate extensively for us, you'll have to give up society entirely for the present, and devote your whole attention to study.' They desire young men on their force, and they have one now who is illustrating for them, having some designs in the holiday *St. Nicholas*, which will probably be in Wilmington on Monday. He has illustrated an article called 'The Horse Hotel' in a way that has gained him much praise. He is an indefatigable worker and puts me to the blush whenever I hear of him.¹ . . .

"I have been thinking lately that stories from the life of Robin Hood might be an interesting thing for *St. Nicholas*. Children are very apt to know of Robin Hood without any very clear ideas upon his particular adventures. And then how gloriously they would illustrate. If thee would lend me thy volume of Percy and express it on to me, I would take great care of it and would make the attempt. I think, if I am not mistaken, that his life is incomplete in that work; does thee know any other one work wherein he appears in his early history and adventures?

"I wonder how long it will be that I shall have to crawl in writing before I can begin to walk? At times I feel discouraged and then again the feeling rises strong within me that there *is* something in me that will produce, perhaps, worthy fruit in time. At present I am trammelled more than I can describe with stiffness in manner, crudeness in

¹ *Edward James Kelly*, who began and did considerable work as an illustrator, but who has since turned his attention entirely to sculpture.

style, and self-consciousness (I do not know how else to describe it) in thought. The feet of my ideas seem clogged with the difficulties of expression; I can't open the flood gates of my mind and pour out my thoughts onto the paper. The sentences will not 'round up' so as to contain the thought in the shell of a few distinctly expressed words. I have to strike again and again with simile and hyperbole before I can crack that invisible, intangible wall that separates my internal thought from the perception of others. One reason I so enjoy and pleasure in my fables is that the thought finds, as it were, a more tangible form, rough though it be, and clad in the rude garb of brute life. But even in them, easy as that way is of exhibiting some of the innumerable variations of human nature, I find in reading them over that I have failed in laying my thought clear and undimmed by diffuseness of language. It is as though the particular thread in the woof of my thoughts broke in my fingers as I strive to draw it forth. . . . "

"November 25, 1876.

"I worked yesterday morning at correcting the fable illustrations for *St. Nicholas* and took them down town with me. I also stopped at Goupil's and ordered a paper stretcher I bought to be sent down to the Academy; it was quite late when I got there, so I did no work. . . .

"When I called on Mr. Drake, he said that Mr. Smith had been speaking about me and urged me again to go down to Wills and take lessons under him. I did not, however, incline much to that plan.

"Two of the illustrations of the fables I sent up to Mrs.

Dodge as she wished to see them before Mr. Drake put them in process.

"I stopped in the editorial rooms of *Scribner's* to see an old Dutch painting that they have been having photographed. I did not see it, however, as Mr. Gilder had it home with him. Mr. Gilder had a long talk with me and *he* advised me to take a course of life study around at the Artists' League, giving me a letter of introduction to a young Mr. Church who has his studio on Thirteenth Street. He also advised me to join the League, as there is a sketch class there where each student poses in turn for the benefit of the others. Since two persons' advice is better than one, I shall most probably take advantage of Messrs. Gilder's and Church's, and join the League, albeit not an inexpensive operation.

"I have been thinking lately of taking a studio down town if I could get one in conjunction with some other young artist, so lessening the expense. I have no opportunity at home for models, etc., comprising all those thousand little surroundings that go so far toward rendering work more easy and speedy. One cannot improve without study from models and nature, as all the good artists here do; and making pictures means making bread and butter to me for a while. . . ."

"November 28, 1876.

"I was at work today making some comic illustrations, as I want to make some money between now and Christmas. The first was called 'Bliss'; it represents a diminutive gamin with his head buried under the sunbonnet of as diminutive a little girl. The second was entitled 'The Spirit is Willing

but the Flesh is Weak'—'Lemme carry your baggage, Mister,' says a very small boy to a gentleman with a very large valise. I did not take them down to Mr. Drake, because it was raining and snowing, besides being rather late.

"I paid a visit to the Art Students' League in the evening. Snowing as it was, there was quite a class assembled, sketching a temporary pose assumed by a young lady. This class is held every evening and would be very useful indeed, I should think. One of the students poses every evening for a half hour. They wished me to begin with my studies last night; as I had nothing ready, however, I postponed joining until next Monday. It will cost me about fifteen dollars, I suspect. . . . "

"November 29, 1876.

" . . . Having drawn two designs I took them down to Scribners', who took one of them; the other I left at Harpers' to be reported upon the following day. Scribners desired my monkey picture which I dispensed to them for only ten dollars, two dollars less than Wood gave me. Still, as Wood changes the titles of my others so as to make them rather vulgar, I was very willing that Scribners should have it even at this reduction . . .

"I entered the life class at the Art Students' League, and as I had not an entire 'pose' to work on, I concluded to make only a pencil sketch. Mr. Wilmot, the teacher, said my 'Venus' was poor but that I might as well join the life and see what I could do. I feel that my drawing far surpasses what it used to be in the Van der Weilian days, and that the pencil study I have begun does me credit for so raw a beginner. . . .

"What do you home folks think about this election now? I declare I feel fairly sick and ashamed of both parties, and hardly know which is the worse. On the Republican party is such a net of cheating, chicanery, meanness, usurpation, and dishonesty, as almost to hide its former nobility. I really think they are doing more harm to themselves by the underhand dishonesty of their operations, than twice four years can repair. As for the Democrats: they are, it seems to me, scarcely if any less to blame than the others—violence, half-uttered threats of warfare and demoralization among their lower classes—still, I do believe they show more forbearance and better obedience to the laws of the Commonwealth than the Republicans, who prate so much of their patriotism, and show their patriotism by forcing, willy-nilly, upon South Carolina, a governor its people don't want, and a man stained with fraud. I'm sick of the whole thing."

"November 30, 1876.

"I finished writing the fable and story for Mrs. Dodge's two woodcuts and took them down this morning to the office. They paid me for my former two budgets of fables, comprising thirteen in all; for which they gave me *thirty dollars!*—a little less than two dollars and a half for each fable. I was far from satisfied at this as thee may well imagine, but I had to swallow it as best I could and digest the hard case in my own inner consciousness. They rather have me. There is no other child's magazine of any worth in the country and my writings are essentially for children. I try to make them as witty as I can, and at the same time indoctrinate a small lesson. I strive to hold the lesson in

view and throw in the wit as an accessory. Perhaps if I do the best I can in this way it may bear fruit at some time; but dear only knows! it does seem as though it would be slow work. We shall see what people say when my little writings make their appearance . . .

"Harpers did not accept the illustration submitted to them, so that makes three I now have upon my hands."

"December 2, 1876.

" . . . I attended the life class last night and finished my pencil sketch from life. Mr. Wilmot said it was in some respects a very nicely conceived piece; the action was stiff and some parts were out of proportion, but the arms were very good. I, myself, however, am not at all satisfied with it and hope to do better next time. It is pretty good pencil work for me, however, and I want to show it to Mr. Drake to see if it won't refute his opinion of the need of rudiments on my part."

"December 4, 1876.

"I did not go to church yesterday as I felt too intolerably lazy. This is the first time I have missed, but I don't think it will be the last. Still, I don't want to drift back to my old-time habits.

"I read the *Comic History* and lolled about all day just exactly as I used to do at home, except that I have no easy chair here—more's the pity. In the evening I drew a pen-and-ink sketch for a subject that was given out for composition at the Art League. It was 'Despair,' which I illustrated by representing an old lawyer who had just upset the ink on his desk papers. It is one of the best, if not *the* best, I have ever done, quickly as it was made. . . . "

"December 5, 1876.

"I had an idea for a political cartoon, which though as a general rule very hard to sell, I concluded to make and see if I could dispose of it. It is to be called the 'Present Political Aspect in the South,' and represents two wolves fighting over the figure of a prostrate woman. . . .

"At four o'clock I went down to the Sketch Club, taking my picture of 'Despair' along. It was a complete success. The folk were very expressive of their approbation. Mr. Church said were I to make a watercolor study of it, I could sell it without doubt; and said further that it was pen-handled in a very masterful manner. Afterward in the life class the students were very much interested and pleased with it. This praise has commenced to set me thinking. Would it be possible that I might make a success in Art? If I concluded to devote myself to that there wouldn't be so much present money-making in it, but opulence in future, should I succeed. If I begin to take up with that vocation, I should have to have a studio. Indeed, I feel the need of it more and more. All the artists who illustrate for magazines here work from models, and in that lies their superiority over artists in other cities; but I have no place to study from models. Then, in case I turn my attention to art proper, I shall have to resume my painting studies from nature in the day class at the Art League. Some artists here *do* work day and night and make a living by illustrating beside. So why shouldn't I do the same? I shall think seriously of it in future.

"After Sketch Class was over, a boy, Joe Evans by name, came to me and invited me to come around to a sketch class held at his house on Madison Avenue every Saturday

morning. He said, 'We have plenty of ladies attending but we want more gentlemen. Of course, I wouldn't ask everyone for, as I said, we want gentlemen.' I should like very much to go, as some of the ladies seem very pleasant, and one in particular struck me as being extremely pretty; still, I hardly think I can find the time. . . . "

"December 6, 1876.

"Yesterday morning I completed the redrawing of my political picture; it came up better than I expected, and indeed I think was quite creditable for me. Unfortunately, however, I did not dispose of it. I took it to the *Graphic* first, but they have a political cartoonist who works for them. Harpers I knew would not take it, for they are too radical; in consequence, I took it to Frank Leslie's. They seemed to like it very much there, but said they did not usually take allegorical pictures; still, they told me to leave it until Mr. Leslie himself could see it the following day. . . .

"The Artists' League gave a reception last evening and it was quite a success. Around the walls were hung the studies and pictures of the students, making quite a creditable show. . . . I was introduced to the vice-president, a very pleasant lady indeed. She complimented me quite highly on my design for 'Despair.'

"There is one young man who attends the Art League whose acquaintance I should like to cultivate. His name is Inness and he is son to Inness, the prominent landscape painter. He is a Swedenborgian, so that is a kind of bond of brotherhood. He is an elegant, handsome fellow with clear-cut features and dark hair. . . . "



From
THE WONDER CLOCK
Harper's Round Table, 1887

"December 8, 1876.

" . . . The fable and comic story which I wrote for Mrs. Dodge's two illustrations were accepted 'with thanks.' . . . I should like to write a story for *Scribner's* before Christmas and have been for the last twenty-four hours raking over the pile of my ideas in search of some stray remnant—so far without success. . . .

"Frank Leslie did not accept my cartoon, but I was not much disappointed thereat. Frank Leslie shows very poor taste; that's all I've got to say. . . .

"I haven't been doing superbly at the life class as yet, the outline of my figure being severely criticized by Professor Wilmot who said it was poor; I rubbed it out and began all over again, with, this time, better success, I think."

"December 11, 1876.

"Yesterday passed as Sundays usually do. I went to church in the morning and 'loafed' all afternoon. The day was intensely cold and I very nearly froze in going to church. I don't believe it pays to be good under all circumstances.

"A young lady accosted me there, whom I was probably introduced to once upon a time, but have since utterly forgotten her name. We carried on quite a spirited conversation in which I constantly addressed her as 'Miss Ah'—or 'Miss Um.' I cannot imagine what caused me to forget her name, for she is by no means ill-favored. She asked me quite anxiously why I had not attended the last two church meetings on Wednesday evening; she then asked me if I had many friends here. I told her that although I had a reasonable amount they were not so thick as blackberries in

summer; she then very kindly invited me to call upon her at No. 100 East Thirty-second Street, and to conclude our conversation I said I should be most happy.

"I had hoped to meet young Mr. Inness there but failed in my object as he did not come. As I said before, I should like to cultivate his acquaintance though the opportunities are not very promising. He attends life class in the morning instead of evening and rarely comes to the Sketch Club.

"I begin to fear that the life class isn't doing me very much good and as it costs me ten dollars per month, I might as well invest that much in having a studio which would do me a vast deal more good."

"December 12, 1876.

" . . . Mr. Drake liked my design for 'Despair' very much. He said my pen-and-ink work was improving, as, indeed, I feel that it is. I am far, very far, behind others yet, though. I should like, if I get a studio, to make a finished pen-and-ink picture for the next Academy Exhibition, some single figure that would not be beyond my scope. That sounds conceited, but there is nothing gained without an effort, and who knows but that I might make a lucky hit? At least there would be no harm in trying. . . .

"I am not attending the Academy any longer because I don't think it was doing me any good. There were no professors there and the students had to go on their own hook, so to speak. . . .

"Last week the work was not so very slim, and thee needn't think that I am getting into a state of hopeless poverty because I don't tell thee every cent I make. So

rest thy mind easy—when I am pushed for money, you'll hear quickly enough of it. . . . ”

“December 14, 1876.

“ . . . I am suffering from a spell of the blues. I have met with constant disappointment this week, and am beginning to get scared with this way of going on. If it continues, I shall not be able to make expenses. I am meeting my first reverses now, and they taste very bitter. If I should fail now, wouldn't it be a humiliating come-down?”

“December 15, 1876.

“Still more reverses, and worse than before! I went down to see Mrs. Dodge yesterday morning to find out whether she had accepted my fairy tale or not. Fortunately I did not receive an answer to *that* in this unlucky time. . . . But what worried me was the complaint that was made of my drawings for the fables; and they certainly do not look well in print. They seem coarse and cheap looking, more so than in the original drawings, for upon being reduced they blotted and came up black and heavy looking.

“Mrs. Dodge complained very much, and although she did not blame, but rather exculpated me, that does not better my chances of illustrating for *St. Nicholas* in the future. ‘I am getting tired of these cheap looking actinics. People are beginning to complain about them, and we shall have to use more wood engravings. Some of the ten pictures are good enough, but many of them are cheap and coarse.’ This seemed to hint that my designs were of that order; and, indeed, I must confess that there are entirely too many grounds for the supposition. Should *St. Nicholas* cast me

off, I should be at sea indeed, for now that magazine is my chief support. . . . I do hope that Mrs. Dodge isn't disgusted with me and my designs *in toto*. If she refuses the fairy tale, I'm done for, for I place great dependence upon that and would be grievously disappointed, should it be refused.

"This was my first rebuff. Next—Harpers declined my design for 'Despair.' It was very clever but they could not use it. Another small design that I had submitted at the same time was too 'loud' for them or in other words was likely to be accused of coarseness.

"I then took them to Frank Leslie. The 'loud' was not too loud for him and he took it. . . .

"This much for my diary this week. It is short and not over sweet. In fact, it combines with its smallness all the bitterness of a quinine pill; and may it be beneficial in removing all unhealthy humours of conceit and self-satisfaction. Still, I do hope that affairs will look brighter by Christmas time, and that present reverses will prove only a salutary check on a course of life that was proving too prosperous. I can tell you, in the last two weeks my expenses have been less than heretofore; and after all, I have quite a sum laid by. One doesn't like to have a nasty little cankering trouble gnawing one about Christmas time, so, as I say, I hope my luck will change.

"I shall try some illustrations for St. Valentine's Day, next week. I have not any very clear ideas on the subject as yet, though I should like to make a silhouette for *St. Nicholas* and a pen-and-ink design for *Harper's*. I don't recollect anywhere that Shakespeare speaks of St. Valentine's

Day except in 'Hamlet' where Ophelia first goes crazy, and that is hardly admissible for illustration. . . .

"To sum up: I am not yet bankrupt; I am improving in drawing; I yet have ideas and pen and ink; and having received a salutary check, let us hope that I may remove the taint of vulgarity that affects my work. . . ."

CHAPTER III

FRUITFUL ASSOCIATIONS

*T*HE depression which marks the closing paragraphs of the diary-letters was not easily dispersed. The Christmas season came and went, and still it was difficult to get the magazines to accept anything. The truth of the matter was that *St. Nicholas* was overstocked, the editors had on hand enough of the fables to last them for many months, since it was not editorial policy to publish too many at once. Consequently there was nothing else for Howard to do but devote himself to some different line of work. This he did, and in so doing he turned away from *Scribner's* and worked almost entirely for the Harper publications.

In the months that followed, the old mental struggle, which was so frequently mentioned in the diary-letters, went on—whether it was better to continue looking to literature as the goal of these apprentice years, or whether art was the more fitting choice. Both his father and mother—and his mother's advice always carried particular weight—approved of the artistic career. Church thought he had considerable talent, and even Mr. Drake admitted that his drawing was improving. Finally, but not without severe internal questionings and many delays, he decided that his abilities led him more naturally towards art. With this change in ambition it became necessary, of course, to have a studio where he could work from models, where he would

not be impeded by the thousand little inconveniences of a boarding-house. Accordingly, in conjunction with two other young men, Durand and LeGendre, he rented a regular studio which was more conveniently located than the Forty-eighth Street room. Here he worked on picture after picture, gradually building up a method of attack which was entirely his own. His ideas were good and he had plenty of them.

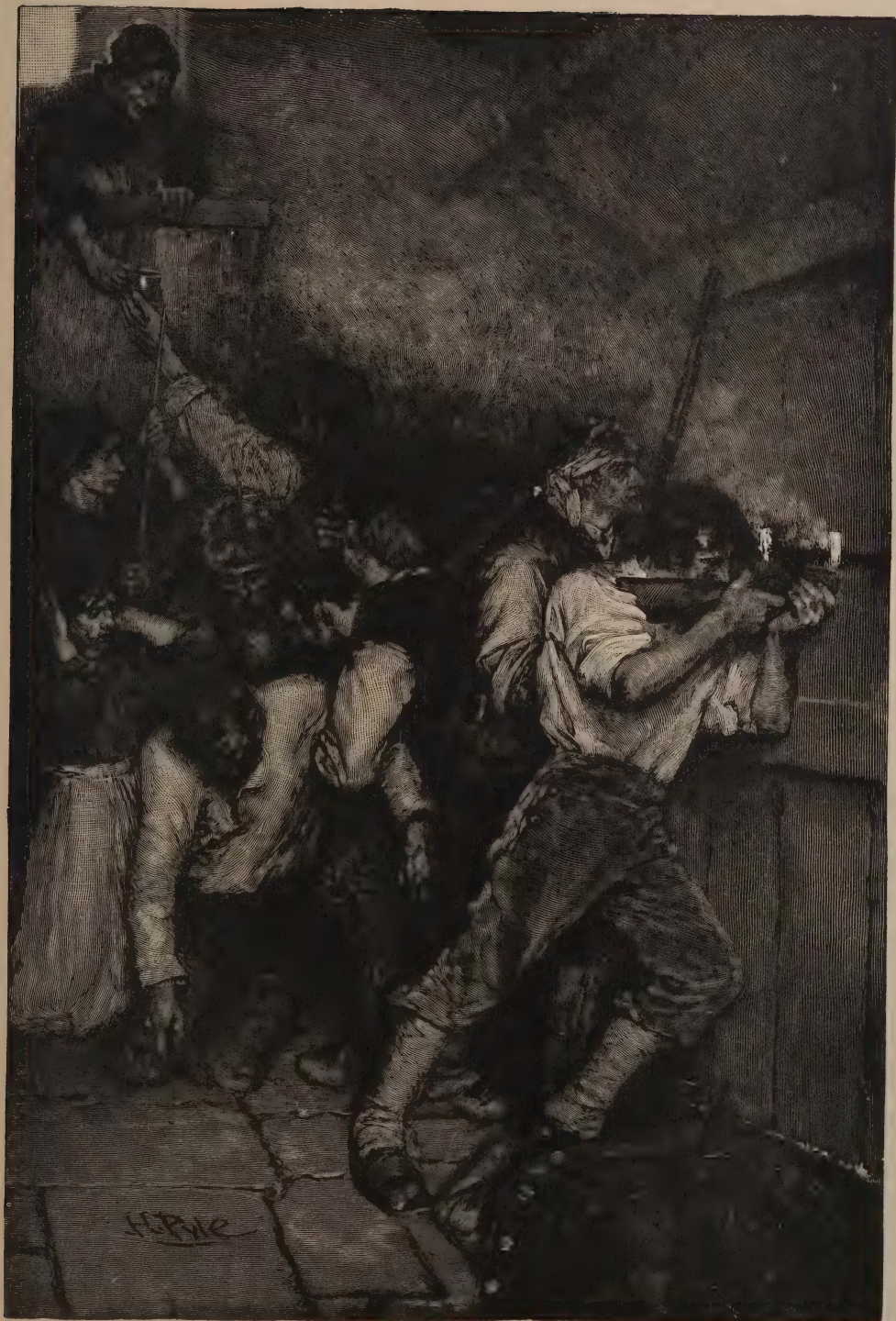
Mr. Charles Parsons, the art editor for Harper & Brothers, had gathered around him and trained a most remarkable group of young illustrators, among whom were Abbey, Frost, and Reinhart, and with these young men he was building up the pictorial side of his magazines to a point which had never before been reached in this country. To him Howard would take his sketches, and since the ideas were very often good, Mr. Parsons would accept them, but since in his opinion the technical work did not come up to the standard, he would have one of his staff artists redraw the picture on wood. This was, of course, very humiliating to the young man whose fertile brain had devised the idea. His friend Church, the man who was later to do some of the charming pictures for Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus*, was continually saying that it was poor policy to drag other people's trains in the way in which young Pyle was doing. The matter rankled, and finally he aroused sufficient courage to ask Mr. Parsons for a chance to try his own hand at it. He tells the story himself:

"I took one day to *Harper's* an idea sketch which I had called 'A Wreck in the Offing.' It represented an alarm brought into the Life Saving Station, a man bursting open the door, with the cold rain and snow rushing in after him,

and shouting and pointing out into the darkness, the others rising from the table where they were sitting at a game of cards.

"I begged Mr. Parsons to allow me to make the picture instead of handing it over to Mr. Abbey or to Mr. Reinhart or Mr. Frost, or to some other of the young Olympians to elaborate into a real picture. With some hesitating reluctance he told me that I might try, and that, in the event of my failure, *Harper's* would pay me ten dollars, I think it was, or fifteen for the idea. I believe I worked upon it somewhat over six weeks, and I might indeed have been working upon it today (finding it impossible to satisfy myself with it) had I not, what with the cost of my models and the expense of living in New York, reduced myself to my last five-cent piece in the world. Then it was that my fate or my poverty, or whatever you may choose to call it, forced me to take the drawing down to *Harper's* instead of drawing it over as I should have liked to have done.

"I think it was not until I stood in the awful presence of the art editor himself that I realized how this might be the turning point in my life—that I realized how great was to be the result of his decision on my future endeavor. I think I have never since passed such a moment of intense trepidation—a moment of such confused and terrible blending of hope and despair at the same time. I can recall just how the art editor looked at me over his spectacles, and to my perturbed mind it seemed that he was weighing in his mind (for he was a very tender man) how best he might break the news to me of my unsuccess. The rebound was almost too great when he told me that Mr. Harper had liked the drawing very much and that they were going to



DEFENSE OF THE STATION
From
THE KENTUCKY PIONEERS
Harper's Magazine, 1887

use it in the *Weekly*. But when he said that they were not only going to use it, but were going to make of it a double-page cut, my exaltation was so great that it seemed to me that I knew not where I was standing or what had happened to me. As I went away I walked upon air—I seemed to float. I found a friend and I took him to Delmonico's, and we had lunch of all the delicacies in season and out of season. . . .

"My drawing was very much liked in the Department and brought me the friendship and acquaintance of all those young Olympians whom before I had regarded only from the marsh of my unsucccess. I met them and I knew them and we consorted together for the two or three years that I remained in New York. . . ." ¹

This was late in 1877, and from that time everything moved more pleasantly. Harper & Brothers were well pleased with his work, he was associating with the people who most interested him, and he was slowly but none the less surely building up an excellent reputation. Some of his later letters to his mother best show the difference between these times and the hard months that had preceded them:

"New York,
"February 28, 1878.

"Dear Mother:

"I hope your patience has not entirely given out at my somewhat lengthened delay in writing. I will not attempt to offer any excuse as I deserve none but will simply throw myself at your mercy with the promise of doing or trying to do better in future. You know that I would rather write

¹ Letter to Forrest Crissey, October 21, 1896.

to 'home folk' than any other in the world but yet I do so abominate letter-writing that I shirk in the most blamable manner a semi-duty which I owe to you. My eyes have been so bad of late that I have not been able to read, write, or do anything else in the evenings. . . .

"I was vastly enlightened, oh! my mother, at your criticism of the proof. You did not seem in the least impressed by the awful grandeur of being the recipient of a 'Harper's block proof,' but quietly absorbed it and proceeded to criticize. Well, I am only sorry that it would be useless to submit aforesaid criticisms to Mr. Parsons as they can't very well correct the expression of the face without doing another block over again, and there isn't time for that, as it is coming out this week. I will send you on a proof of my Indian picture, so you can see how an engraver can knock spots out of a thing, and make allowances for my poor work accordingly. I shall probably send you a proof of my 'Carnival in Philadelphia'—during General Howe's possession of that city.

"Work is beginning to roll in upon me at last, and at last I think I have 'struck pan.' My work is beginning to pay better too and I think before long I shall be able to pay off my debts to father *in toto*. I have just finished a picture for *Harper's Monthly* of an old darky giving a lecture to a naughty little girl. It was quite a success and they are going to put it into the hands of the best engraver in New York City, Mr. Smithwick. They gave me two pictures to do for them in illustration to a most excellent story of modern Spanish life. They are beyond all comparison the best things I have ever done. I don't think I am as a general rule inclined to be 'cock almighty' about my work but

for these two designs I can say that they are so far beyond anything I have ever done before that I can hardly realize their being my own work. They are not finished yet, but so far every touch I have put on them has improved them.

“The first one represents a Spanish caballero standing against the side of a bridge looking after his Dulcinea whom he has mortally offended by a lampoon written in a fit of jealousy. She is ‘soaring’ past him with a scornful expression on her face and he is looking after her in a beseeching way. The scene is early morning and I think I have gotten a real feeling of early sunlight in the picture. I borrowed a Spanish cloak from an artist friend of mine that almost entirely covers the modern European dress and which with the addition of a sombrero gives him quite a picturesque look. I hired a Spanish woman’s costume in which I posed my female model Jenny Watts, a very pretty ladylike girl, and I tell you, she cut quite a shine!

“The story goes on to say that after having thus mortally offended his sweetheart and being for some time unable to regain her love the cavalier finally succeeds by sending her a casket. In the casket was the pen with which he had written, broken; under the pen, a sheet of paper where was written in his blood ‘Retribution,’ and under the paper his right hand. This, of course, ‘dropped’ the girl. A very effective dénouement, I think. The scene I took for illustration was when she is just opening the box, or rather, had just opened it, the horror not yet fully dawned upon her mind. This was Mr. Alden’s suggestion. And I have made an illustration that some of my artist friends say shows not only talent but genius—I only hope it is so. Mr. Abbey

says it is one of the best things that have been done in New York illustrating.

"But enough of myself, for no doubt you are somewhat anxious to know what Messrs. Parsons, Alden, Abbey, and Co. are like.

"Well, let us begin with Mr. Parsons, as he is at present my mainstay in New York. He is distinctly American in appearance; not the lanky, cadaverous American cast though. He has a bald forehead, and gray hair which he brushes back, a gray beard, and wears glasses. He is like a certain class of Americans whom one meets every day, but I just can't think of any particular one just now. He is kind, cordial, and in every way encouraging; praises my work and tells me to go ahead and I'm sure to win. He is a gentleman, and a gentleman of refined tastes.

"Mr. Drake of Scribner's, on the other hand, is almost the antitype of Mr. Parsons. He is a very youngish man of about thirty-five or forty, but as bald as a bat, with the exception of a few thin scraggly hairs about the nape of his neck. His head looks like an egg, and sits with a sort of pendulous ease on a skinny neck. He has a thin, scraggly beard and moustache. He has a habit of dropping his lower jaw and scratching the beard on his chin in a vague uncertain manner. Yet, in spite of this vagueness and uncertainty, he always manages to get things cheaper than what the artists ask for them. Abbey tells a very characteristic story, which, whether it is true or not, applies very patly to Mr. Drake.

"A poor devil of an artist brings a picture to him.

"Drake: How much shall I give you for this?

"P. D. of an A.: Twenty dollars.

"D.: Well—now—I think that is too much. I'll give you eighteen.

"P. D. of an A.: Oh yes; I made a mistake; it was eighteen.

"D.: Well, I'll give you fifteen.'

"Mr. Alden, the Editor of *Harper's Monthly*, is in my eyes, a strikingly handsome man of about fifty. He has an unkempt look though, his hair and beard are shaggy and look constantly tousled. He has very regular features and brown eyes deep set under rather heavy brows. He, too, has an absent-minded manner, but not a weak manner like Mr. Drake. He speaks very little, and when he does talk he contorts his face as though the act of talking was a painful labor and effort with him. But he, too, is very encouraging and kind. Last time I was down there he rather surprised me by coming into the art rooms and joining Mr. Parsons in talking with me for nearly half an hour about American art and artists and what not. Rather a complimentary thing for a poor devil of an artist like me.

"Mr. Abbey is a little man about twenty-six years old. He is a comical little fellow, but quite the gentleman; he wears glasses, and being troubled with dyspepsia, has a habit of grinning in rather a ferocious manner.

"We have picked up another friend in our building here, Mr. Marble, a tall, good-looking, blue-eyed fellow with a short, thick, blond beard. He is a good-hearted, good-natured fellow with considerable talent. He came over to our rooms here from the rear building and made a water-color sketch of Jenny when she posed for the first design in my Spanish story.

"The other artists in his part of the building are a dis-

solite set, and dissolute in a low, vulgar, squalid way that you don't often find out of New York—thank Heaven! very rarely there. Three of them occupy our old room and carry on in a way that evokes expressions of disgust even from Sheahan, the Irish sculptor, of whom I spoke to you when home last Christmas.

"Talking of Sheahan, by the bye, he came over to our room not long since to borrow some 'tobaccy.' We induced the unsuspecting victim to take a social smoke with us and gave him in an offhand way a huge German pipe, filling it with the strongest tobacco. The effect was that in about thirty minutes he was just about the sickest Irishman on this side of the Atlantic. He's never been over to borrow 'tobaccy' since.

"But here I have been rambling on too long. I won't inflict you any longer, but will mercifully bring it to a close. Otherwise, it would not be dutiful in

"Your affectionate son,

"HOWARD."

"New York,

"November 3, 1878.

"Dear Mother:

"Once more I protest seriously and earnestly you *must* write to me so that I can receive your letters before Sunday, if you have any wish for a weekly letter. This time your letter did not arrive until last Tuesday, and consequently the Sunday was skipped without my usual interesting epistle being written. Believe me, I am anxious to write, more anxious, I am afraid, than you are to receive my letters, but

I cannot, I must not spoil you by writing two to your one. So much for my protest. I have duly filed it, so there the matter may rest. So now for other fields and pastures new.

“If I had decided to take the large room in the University Building I spoke of, your admonitory letter would have arrived too late to prevent the catastrophe; but although I duly acknowledge the coin of a certain unwisdom and a going heart and heels into thoughtless expense (a sign of true genius, believe me) I was not *quite* so shiftless as to enter into *such* an expensive venture. The four hundred dollars I might have struggled through, but not with the ambition of furnishing such a room, of paying for the amount of coal necessary for heating it, and janitors’ fees of six dollars a month extra, so I firmly turned my back on the tempting object and took a more modest studio. I am now settled at Room 31, No. 788 Broadway—788 is at the corner of Tenth and Broadway. I have looked all over New York and have seen all the studios that are to be seen and am sure that I have one of the nicest, pleasantest rooms in the city. It has a fine north light and two side lights looking out on Broadway. It is only two blocks above Scribners’ office and I can now go down to Harpers’ and return in half an hour, instead of its taking me a half day to complete the journey and its business as formerly. There is steam heat in the room and running water and altogether it is very satisfactory. The rent asked for it last year was thirty-five dollars a month. I have got it for twenty-three, and an allowance for fixing it up, calcimining the walls, etc. . . .

“I am not yet done with my ills. for the *Peninsular*

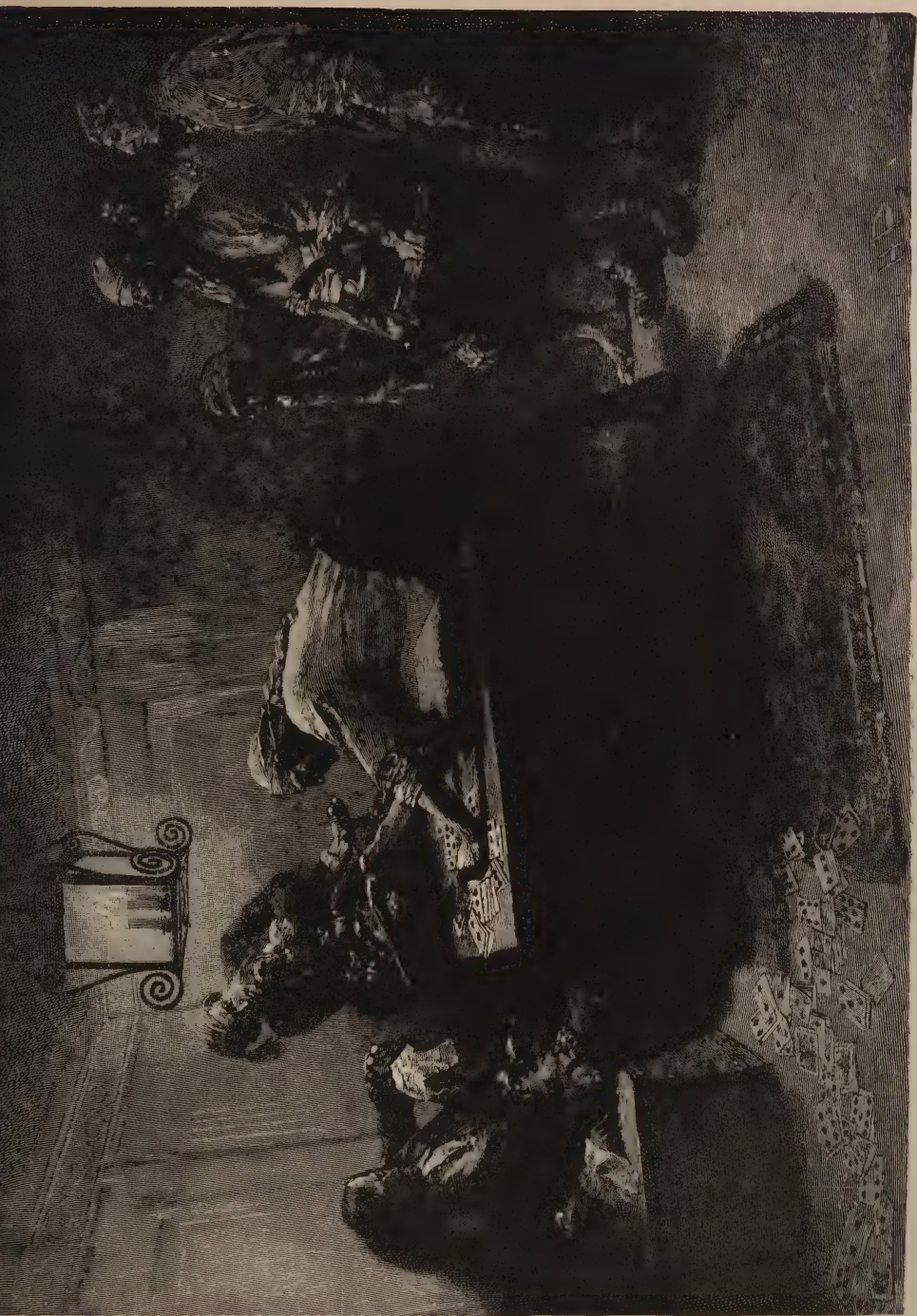
Canaan,¹ but have now only two more illustrations to do, and behind them the vague and open future with dear only knows what coming. Possibly job work in the line of writing more fables and doing more pen-and-inks for *Scribner's* and *St. Nicholas*. Well, well, it's no use borrowing trouble, is it?

"However, I have one more prospect. Mr. Parsons was speaking to me about doing a double page Christmas piece for the *Weekly*. I have thought of a subject—'Christmas Morning in Old New York'—by 'old New York' I mean just preceding the Revolution. I intended in this bringing in a scene in the old part of the town, Chatham Street, or the old Dutch Church, or some other such well-known point. An early winter's morning, snow on the ground, various groups of figures of separate interest: two old cronies shaking hands and exchanging the compliments of the season; a couple—an old lady and gentleman, perhaps—exchanging pinches of snuff; a miserable blind beggar on the curb with his begging dog, and on his breast a placard 'A Merry Christmas'; a paterfamilias and his family discussing a sign:

BOWERIE THEATRE
HARLEQUINADE
FROM
MR. GARRICK'S THEATRE
DRURY LANE;

a young widow, poor and humble, bartering for a lean turkey with a poultry dealer; two smart young officers

¹ An article describing life and customs in Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia, published in *Harper's Monthly*.



CAPTURE OF THE GALLEON

From

BUCCANEERS AND MAROONERS OF THE SPANISH MAIN
Harper's Magazine, 1887

eyeing her as they pass along the street; sedan-chairs, and men in overcoats bearing them, winding on their way to the Old Dutch Church; two gentlemen firmly discussing the Stamp Act as they pass along in front of the Stamp Office; accessories of Christmas gifts exhibited in the old-fashioned stores, and so forth. Mr. Parsons took to the notion very kindly; said he thought it would make an excellent subject, and one that Mr. Harper would like to have, etc. I told him that I should not like to undertake it under a hundred and twenty-five dollars. He hemmed and hawed, but intimated that it might pass at that. It is a pretty big subject to undertake, but it is one that I would thoroughly enjoy doing. So much for myself, and now to other and more general topics. . . .

"The composition class at the League still occupies much of my attention. The subject last week was 'Zekle's Courtship.' I did not make a composition myself, however, as I was quite busy last week working on a design 'The Interior of a Fishing Shanty,' which took me all week, cost me something for models, and at which I did not make a princely fortune. Mr. Parsons liked it, however, and that was some satisfaction. But to return to the composition class, Abbey made a stunning composition for me. It was almost too masterly to be appreciated by such students as hadn't undertaken such a thing themselves, but we advanced students rather appreciated it.

"Speaking of Abbey, he is about to start for England, *Harper's* sending him. I shall miss him dreadfully for I like him very much. He has one of those pleasant faces that always make a man feel the better for looking at them. And then he is such a chipper, jocund little fellow, with

a merry twinkle of his eyes and a laugh that means business. His very eyeglasses have a certain humorous character of their own. As for his going to Europe, I only wish *Harper's* would send me—to Antwerp. Yes, Antwerp or Brussels is my latest fad.

"I went over to Brooklyn with Abbey the other evening to visit his relatives there and take tea with them. They are nice, very nice. Mrs. Curtiss, his cousin, is a handsome, refined-looking lady of about thirty; Mr. Curtiss is a middle-aged man with white hair, very gentlemanly looking; Mrs. Curtiss's father, mother, and brother live with them. They seem to think the world and all of Abbey, Ed as they call him, and mourn in a half joking way about his going, telling him how homesick he will be, as he probably will. I passed a very pleasant evening indeed and much to my surprise seemed to take immensely with them. Mr. and Mrs. Curtiss were exceedingly hospitable, and walked all the way down to the ferry with me, begging me to call again. As I left them, Mrs. Curtiss said, 'We are going to talk about you all the way home, Mr. Pyle, and you needn't be afraid of what we are going to say, either.' Abbey is very anxious for me to go to England with him; I only wish I could.

"After the composition class at the League, Chase, the brag American artist who gained so many honors abroad, a very enthusiastic and interesting man; Shirlaw, Reinhart, Church, yours affectionately, and one or two others paraded around to a hotel, there to imbibe the draught that cheers but not inebriates, yclept beer—real Munich Lager Beer! Then the subject of raising a Kneipe or Art Students' Club arose. 'You want bare walls, sir,' said Chase with a snap

of his eyes and a bounce in his chair, 'bare walls, sir, and decorate 'em yourself.' This was addressed not to any special individual, understand, but to the crowd in general. 'Yes sir! you want to decorate 'em with cartoons, stunning you know. Big cartoons and paintings, "Fall of Satan," a Blaze of Light, you know, Blackness below, immense—historical pictures and so forth—stunning!'

"'Yes,' says Reinhart, 'you want old furniture, open fireplaces, andirons, claw-foot tables, and so forth; none of your veneered stuff, but everything artistic.'

"'Yes,' puts in practical Church, 'and a dumb waiter to send up beer and Welch rabbits from a beer saloon below, for there must be a beer saloon below.'

"'And we can sit around the fire and tell stories,' says Reinhart.

"'Yes, stunning,' says Chase, holding up his fingers; 'I've thought of lots of 'em—four—five—just while you were talking.'

"And so Messrs. Pyle, Mitchell, and Zaugbaum were appointed to select the room—above a beer saloon. Mitchell and Zaugbaum are very much of gentlemen but not much of artists. The affair as it stands now consists of a luncheon on my part with them. I left them to return to my work while they went in search of the room. . . .

"There is a dearth of male models here in New York; indeed last week I went on the warpath; finally I came to an Intelligence Office, though apparently from the looks of the loungers around, there wasn't much of that article to be gained there. However, I asked them if they wanted a job. I was at once assailed by a chorus of 'Yes sir!' 'Yes sir!' 'Take me!' You would have thought I had a political

office at my command. However, I escaped with my life and whole clothes and a victim, whom I immediately transported to my studio and posed him at once, posed him until the sweat beaded his brow and he complained of feeling 'jest a wee bit tired, sorr!'

"But by Jove, I really must stop; I must have pity on you. But you brought this on yourself. If you write me in time, I will only send four sheets next week . . . Good-bye—love to all.

"Very affectionately,

"HOWARD.

"P. S. . . . I was fixing my papers today, looking over your old letters to me. I declare they make me feel warm around the cockles of my heart, which may perhaps account for the length of this letter. . . .

"H."

"New York,

"November 16, 1878.

"Dear Mother:

"Long looked for come at last! I had begun to despair of receiving any letter from you at all. At least I began to despair at first, but ended by getting 'ripping mad.' I had in my mind fixed a cuttingly sarcastic postal card that would pierce to your very heart, but luckily for you your tardy letter came just in the nick of time to save yourself. I must confess that when it *did* come it was not very plethoric of news; glittering garrulities about dressmaking and so forth, but such as it was, it was truly welcome. . . .

"Now you asked in a contemptuous tone—no, I won't say *contemptuous* but rather *familiar* tone—a tone entirely devoid of the proper amount of awe and wonder—about our 'Artists' Club over the Beer Saloon.' Now, madam, let

me tell you, this is no light matter, but one that should rather be spoken of beneath your breath. We assemble there to imbibe inspiration, the beer and pretzels being a secondary object. My 'man of the stunning cartoons,' as you are pleased to designate him, happens to be Mr. William Chase, engravings from the photographs of whose paintings you may possibly see in *Harper's* soon along with sundry other leaders in art, as a representative American artist. He is Piloty's favorite scholar, whose children he painted as well as a somewhat well-known portrait of Prince Bismarck. He at present happens to have the reputation of standing at the head of the younger American school of art. He is rather a small man with snapping black eyes, a quick nervous manner, a thin handsome face, artistic beard and moustache, and thick black hair standing erect all over his head. To conclude with, he is a polished gentleman, has the best standard of all American artists abroad, and has a studio with the most magnificent stuff in it in the shape of tapestries and old Italian furniture, I ever saw in my life. Such is 'the man of the stunning cartoons' with whom, seriously speaking, your son feels highly honored at being connected.

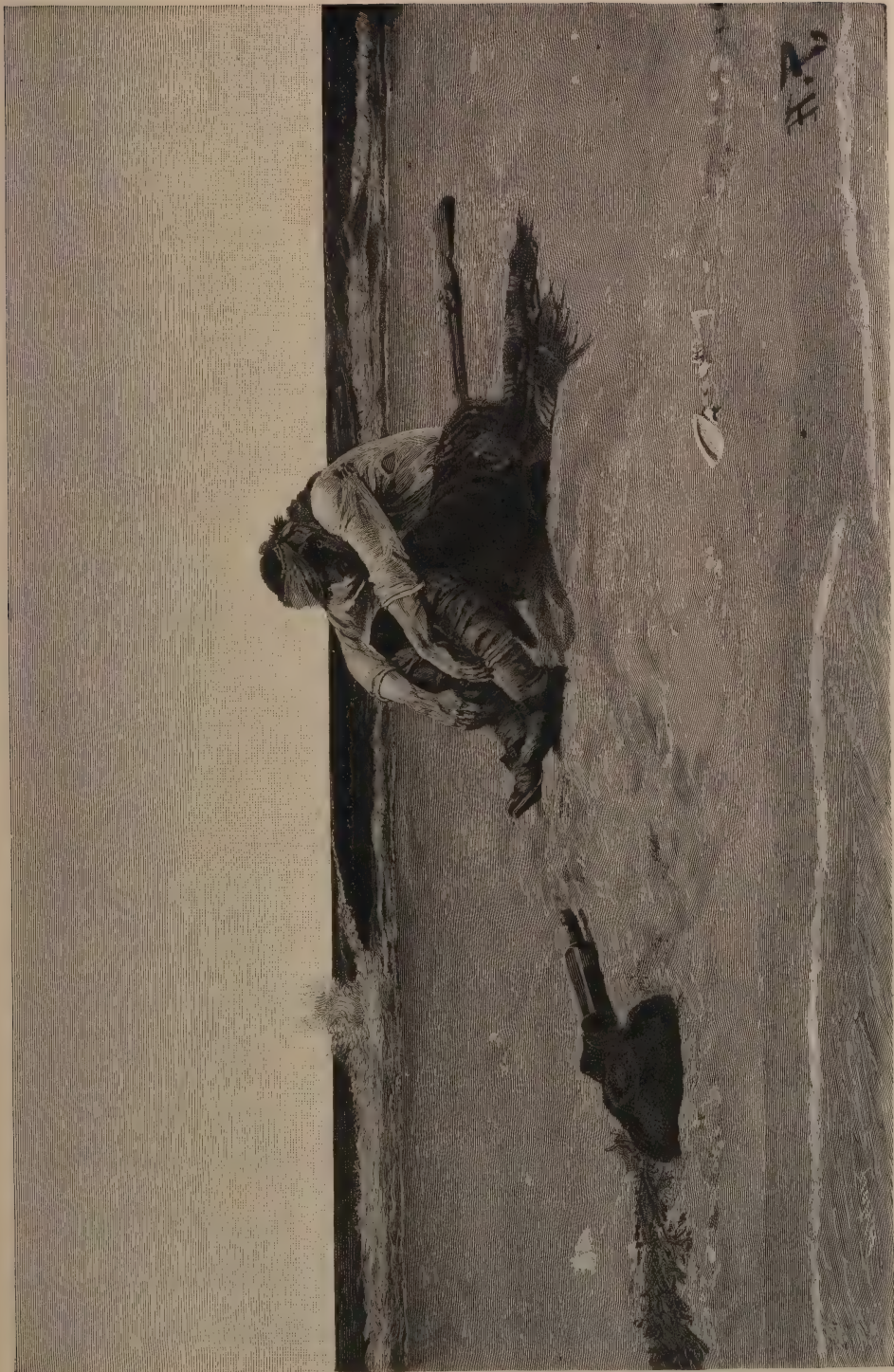
"Next, Walter Shirlaw, also a Munich student, standing only second to Chase. He painted the picture of 'Tuning the Bell,' sold abroad, and a photograph of which was engraved and published in the London *Graphic* as the representative picture of the year in which it was exhibited in Germany. Shirlaw is a queer, tall, leathery-faced man with cadaverous cheeks, a slow way of talking, long Indian-like hair, and is very homely. The very antipode of Chase in fact. He has queer, long, bony fingers, the peculiar

strangeness of which I could not at first determine, until at length I saw that the first finger of each hand was the longest. He is one of the best-hearted men in the world, kindly to a fault, but upon the whole a just man. His criticisms and hints have been of the greatest use to me, and upon the whole, I look upon Shirlaw with more respect probably than upon any man in New York.

"Next comes Julian Weir, son of Professor Weir of West Point, a gay, handsome, roystering blade, broad-built and burly, one such as you might picture to yourself as the beau ideal of a handsome, roaring, young English country squire of the early part of this century. He is a handsome man of about twenty-six or -seven, with regular features, a firm rather heavy chin, short curly hair, a thick neck and broad shoulders. Yet, in spite of this seeming 'fleshiness,' there is a true vein of honest sentiment running through his nature that develops itself in a delicacy and impalpability of flesh color that has more real refinement about it than either the fiery Chase or the thoughtful Shirlaw can produce. One picture of his particularly, a head of a little French peasant girl, exhibited in the French Salon of 1876, made more noise there and took a higher prize than any American picture painted abroad with the exception of Bridgman's. Weir is a pupil of Gérôme, I believe.

"Such are three of the present leaders, then follow in succession Beckwith, Abbey, Reinhart, etc.

"I believe the latest plans are gradually drifting around to the determination of calling together about thirty of the leading artists to a general meeting to elect ten members in New York City as the very *crème de la crème* of New York artists. These ten men will in all probability be Ward



MAROONED

FROM

BUCCANEERS AND MAROONERS OF THE SPANISH MAIN

Harper's Magazine, 1887

the sculptor, possibly Church the landscape artist, Chase, Shirlaw, Weir, George Inness, Swain Gifford, Louis Tiffany (possibly), Winslow Homer, John La Farge, possibly Abbey, or if he goes abroad, Reinhart may gain the election in place of Weir or Tiffany. The outside honorary members will probably be Aikens of Philadelphia, Hunt of Boston, Boughton and Hennessey of England with Abbey if he goes there, Bridgman of Paris, and Duveneck of Munich, as representative American artists. This seems at present to be the drift of the club; in addition to these full members, there will be associate members to the amount of twenty or thirty. It is intended at first to make the club a simple matter, for it is not for the public, but for artists; a sort of Masonic Brotherhood, as it were, but without secrecy. However, *none whatever* are to be admitted into the club but such as make art absolutely and entirely their profession; by art I mean the arts of design. It may not come to any conclusion, but I hope it does.

" . . . I turned to tackle my 'Christmas in Old New York.'¹ In the very outset difficulties met me. I couldn't get costumes, that is *correct* costumes. I could get them as near as those Clifford posed in for me as 'British Intervention,' but now those do not suit my fastidious taste any longer. I know what is correct and I must have *that*. I rummaged among the costumers and at last thought I had found a good one among them, but he sent me such stuff—such vile stuff—that, my disgust giving way to anger, I kicked the boot-tops into one corner, the coat into another, and the hat on top of the closet, in consequence

¹ This picture was not published until Christmas, 1880, when it appeared in *Harper's Weekly*, vol. xxiv, p. 828.

of which I tore said hat. This morning the costumer, a big, flabby, meek man, came to my studio. 'How you like dose soldier clothes?' he said. It was Sunday to be sure, but in spite of that I took him by the buttonhole and so retained him while I reproached him bitterly. He took the costume and the torn hat meekly away, evidently looking upon me as the most magnanimous of men, that I spoke of my grievances rather in sorrow than anger. In consequence of this, I shall probably have to have a costume made—four or five of us will probably go in together and have several made under our own supervision—correctly. . . .

"And now for the most important item—but I must take a new sheet of paper. I take a fresh pen, dip it in the ink and begin—Harpers want me to go to Texas for them. There, I knew I should break the news too suddenly to you! Yes, Harpers want me to go to Texas for them; for four or five months too, and probably in three or four weeks. Mr. Parsons spoke of it to me the other day, asking upon what terms I would go. I told him I did not think forty dollars a week and expenses paid would be too much, and he agreed with me. I did not jump very eagerly at the proposal as I should like now for the present to remain permanently in New York. Here I enjoy myself; I have found at last congenial companions among the more considerable artists. There I shall have a hard life, a great deal of horseback travel from ranch to ranch, which induces a sore sitting-down place, and introductions to total strangers, which I hate. I consulted Shirlaw and Church whose opinions I greatly rely on: Church says go of course; Shirlaw says, 'I don't know; it may do you good.' On the next

day I went down and told Mr. Parsons that I should like to accept, but much disliked the literary part of it. He said he was glad to hear this, as Mr. Alden thought that a literary man and an artist should go together, and that I should take either the one or the other. Of course, I chose the artistic part and Mr. Parsons agreed with me. He said the matter was not entirely settled yet, but they thought that undoubtedly the article should be put under way. Somehow or other I don't feel very much enthusiasm about it and indeed can hardly realize it, it seems so dim and improbable. I shall not be disappointed if it fall through, as it may, and I rather believe it will; neither shall I feel very much elated if it is passed. In short, I view the possibility of it with an indifference that surprises myself. . . .

"Shirlaw and I went the other night to see the last presentation of 'The School for Scandal' at Wallack's. It was 'stunning,' as Chase says. . . .

"Abbey starts for England on Saturday. So finishes my budget and with it my letter. *Adieu*—Love to all.

"HOWARD."

The Texas trip alluded to in this letter did not materialize. Perhaps it was just as well that it didn't, for Texas could have done little for Howard Pyle—his work was not of the sort that requires a special knowledge of the western background—and there is no denying the fact that his continual association in New York with men of Chase's and Shirlaw's stamp, which was thus left uninterrupted, had a most happy influence on his development.

The next and last letter of the group to be quoted ex-

presses toward the end his desire to study abroad. It is, of course, useless to speculate as to what would have happened had he done so, but it is difficult to keep from feeling that, under the influence of French ideas and French technique, many of the things for which he has been most loved would never have been given to the world.

“New York,

“November 25, 1878.

“Dear Mother:

“I must confess that this week comes a dearth of news after the plenty of last letter, although now that I come to think of it it was more description than news after all. I am glad to see that at last you ‘veil your stomach’ and confess with the proper humility the greatness of the earth, that is of the New York art earth, although you still continue to call Mr. Chase ‘the man of the stunning cartoons,’ which not only sounds like a line in a comic ballad but is a flippancy which is aggravating. . . .

“On Monday night we had a second meeting of ‘our club,’ Walter Shirlaw presiding as Chairman. We talked, oh! how we talked. First one member would arise calling vigorously ‘Mr. Chairman! Mr. Chairman!’ Mr. Chairman would perhaps be talking affably on indifferent topics with the member nearest him, but presently, remembering himself, he would answer, stiffening up his back at the time, ‘Mr. O’Donovan has the floor.’ Mr. O’Donovan would thereupon launch forth with a burst of Hibernian eloquence. From the subject of qualifying membership he would wander to a dissertation upon modern art compared with the ancient, and from that to a discussion of

the comparative merits of the Venus de Milo and the Torso Belvedere; this would touch Reinhart to the quick and he would immediately join in, the Hibernian and American elements flowing happily together. Mr. Chairman would presently express *his* opinion and then confusion would reign. Thus we sat discussing club matters, beer, and pretzels, until half after eleven. At the end of that time it was determined upon to invite nine more men to meet us and 'talk over matters.' If eleven men involve themselves in such confusion, what will twenty do? Tomorrow night we meet.

"Our composition class at the League still prospers. The subject last week was 'A Cold Night.' I treated it by representing a highwayman who had just entered a roadside inn (American) and is standing with his back to the fire jealously watching a group of countrymen who are seated around a table discussing hot whiskey punch. They are whispering among themselves about the suspicious stranger, and he slyly holds a pistol behind him to be in readiness in case of an attack.¹

"It gives you at least an idea of the positions of the figures. It is the best thing I have ever done and was very much praised up by the boys (Shirlaw, Chase, and Reinhart). I am going to send it to Harpers tomorrow. I don't believe it will go, but I may as well venture it . . .

"Once more I have discreetly saved my most important item until the last. A gentleman came to my studio, one I have known for some time, and made me an offer as follows: If I could get two other men or three others,

¹ This sketch was afterward elaborated and published under the title "The Mysterious Guest," in *Harper's Weekly*, vol. xxvii, p. 185.

as the case may be, to go in with him, he, on his part, would give me two hundred dollars a year to keep me in Paris for five, six, or seven years, long enough in short for me to finish my studies there; the only return to be that I paint him a picture at the end of my studies in my best manner. For seven hundred dollars a year I could live well in Paris. If I could only get two others to take part in the arrangement I could manage it, but I do not know anyone except Harpers who would be at all likely to help me. It seems hard, when one thinks what two hundreds dollars means to a rich man, that I cannot manage it. To whom shall I apply? But here I am at the bottom of my third sheet, so good-bye.

“HOWARD.”

CHAPTER IV

THE RETURN

*L*ATE in the year 1879 New York began to lose its interest for Howard Pyle. There had been something very attractive in the free and easy life, full of triumphs and defeats, crowded with companions who had been something more than friends to him, who had been fellow-workers striving for the same ideal, a perfection of the illustrative art. But now the old cameraderie was breaking up; Abbey had gone to England, Frost was in Philadelphia, Reinhart was drawn away by his increasing work and growing popularity. The ranks were being filled by a new class of artists, "the straight hat brims and pointed beards" as Remington called them, who were not so interested in the practical side of illustration, but who devoted themselves more to the accepted phases of landscape and portraiture, who borrowed freely from anything eccentric, and constantly defended their own little peculiarities. With this type of artist Howard Pyle could not associate and remain happy. He was too overwhelmingly occupied with ideals; his thoughts were big; he was planning how illustration might be made a well-recognized branch of the Fine Arts. These artists had no interest in any such improvement. Illustration to them was mere hack work. To one of Howard Pyle's temperament, which was courageously manly, and yet colored with a poetic mysticism that gave

him a clear vision into the minds of children, it was inevitable that this kind of artist should seem effeminate and unpractical. He found it impossible to be on intimate terms with them.

In the meantime his work had improved vastly. He was making more and more drawings for Mr. Parsons, and was meeting continually with that generous man's approval. He had written a short story of Colonial days for *Harper's*, "The Last Revel in Printz Hall,"¹ which had marked a great advance over the earlier work for *St. Nicholas*, and which had been moderately successful with the public. The illustrations for this story, and for two articles by other hands, "The Old National Pike,"² and "Sea Drift from a New England Port,"³ had given the most convincing evidence that here was a man who was able to portray Colonial life with an accuracy and spirit which no one else had ever approached. These successes gave him a good reputation with the Harpers, who were very anxious to keep him before their public. He had accomplished what he had come to New York to do: he had built up his professional skill, and had found for his productions a market where he was sure of being well paid.

Now, there was no reason for remaining in New York, especially when he found his surroundings so unpleasant. His thoughts turned irresistibly to Wilmington. He could live there more cheaply and at the same time have all the advantages of being with his family and with the people whom he had known from childhood. Already he had the project of a book in his head—the *Robin Hood* that had

¹ *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, vol. lix, p. 520, (September, 1879).

² *Ibid.*, vol. lix, p. 801, (November, 1879).

³ *Ibid.*, vol. lx, p. 59, (December, 1879).



A SAILOR'S SWEETHEART

From

BY LAND AND SEA

Harper's Magazine, 1895

been mentioned in the diary-letters. In Wilmington he would have plenty of opportunity to do work for the magazines and at the same time start on this book, which he was sure would immediately place him high in the ranks of writers for children. At home he would be able to take advantage of his mother's criticism, and with *Robin Hood* looming up in the foreground that was an advantage not to be considered lightly. All these things with their cumulative weight convinced him that there was nothing more to be gained by remaining in New York, and hastened his departure to Wilmington.

Before leaving, however, he arranged with the Harpers and with Mr. Parsons that stories and articles should be sent to him for illustration, and that he should be considered as a regular member of the staff. For the Scribner house he had done very little work since the earliest days, and he could consequently make no such agreement with them, but he hoped, nevertheless, to do something for them occasionally.

In Wilmington things were very little changed. There was the same happy family, the same congenial atmosphere, the intoxicating enthusiasm and ever-loyal interest on the part of his mother. A studio was arranged on the top floor of the house. Mrs. Pyle gave it the feminine touch, made it comfortable, and kept it in order. Here he could work, drawing whatever pictures Harpers requested of him. For models he used his mother, his brothers, or any obliging friend of the family. In addition to this work, he spent many hours over the composition of that children's book which was to start him on a career of writing.

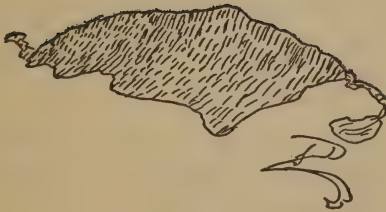
There was one New York friendship that continued.

A. B. Frost was not so far away but that he could come to Wilmington occasionally to visit. The two of them would go on sketching expeditions along the banks of the Brandywine and among the rolling hills that lay to the north and west. Those were peaceful days, days when the gathering of impressions and knowledge were the all-important events. As Mr. Frost says, "Through the period of our intimacy nothing really happened—it was just a cordial, humdrum friendship." But it kept Howard Pyle in touch with a master of his craft, and to a certain extent continued the influence which the "Olympians" of the New York days had had on him.

At this time the chief subject in his head was history, and how to adapt it to popular pictures and stories. He read voluminously in Parkman and Bancroft and everybody else who had written on American history; he talked with all the old people who could tell him stories that they had heard from their fathers and mothers concerning the Revolutionary War and the Colonial days. All this he absorbed eagerly and remembered with remarkable tenacity. It was definite and rigorous research; no detail was missed; and all of it was of such a nature that he could use it in his future work. Years later he could tell precisely how many buttons a colonel in a Massachusetts regiment had on his coat, or could give the exact color of the hat worn by General Wolfe. He knew in what battles each regiment had been engaged; he knew the definite line of march in every campaign, and the spot where every battle had been fought. A great enthusiasm carried him through this continual prying into musty volumes, and it was an enthusiasm that never dwindled.

THE RETURN

With his newly acquired historical information he tried an experiment or two in the form of short articles on phases of Colonial life that had not been given prominence in the



From
TOM CHIST AND
THE TREASURE BOX
Harper's Round Table
1896

public eye. The first was an account of the Philadelphia Bartrams, that quaint and little-known family of botanists which had done so much to acquaint European scientists with the hitherto unknown types of flora that existed in

the wilds of America. Not only did he make clear the great contribution to knowledge made by John Bartram, but he also gave a glowing picture of the simplicity of life and the hospitality of the old Quaker. This article,¹ with its perfectly planned illustrations, greatly impressed Mr. Parsons, who immediately requested another of the same nature. This time it was an account of "Old-Time Life in a Quaker Town"²—a sympathetic exposition of old Wilmington, alive with anecdote and marked by a vigorous love of the subject. These were sufficient to establish his reputation for this kind of work, and to make his standing with *Harper's* more fixed than it had been before.

Since he was perfectly capable of both writing and illustrating, the publishers would occasionally send him to some locality which in their opinion was so little known that it might provide enough material of an interesting nature to warrant an article. Several times he was sent off into remote districts of Pennsylvania or New Jersey in quest of such journalistic fodder, and he seldom failed to make a good thing of it.

In the meantime he was thoroughly enjoying his life in Wilmington. It was quiet and restful after the activity of the preceding three years. He had the opportunity of doing a number of things for which there never had been time in New York. He could read much more, he could occasionally plan a picture from his own ideas without thought of publication and without trying to make it suitable for the magazines; and these activities were in addition to the historical research and the *Robin Hood*. But, perhaps,

¹ "Bartram and His Garden," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, February, 1880, vol. lx, p. 321.

² *Ibid.*, January, 1881, vol. lxii, p. 178.

best of all was the re-entry into the community life, the simple pleasures of lawn tennis and whist parties, the constant society of the restrained but cultivated young Wilmingtonians, the great majority of whom were either Quakers or of Quaker extraction. He took a moderately active part in the social life of the little city, but always a simple part. He would not allow himself to be lionized because of his art connections. Even his successes, which had been considerable, especially for a town such as Wilmington, did not put any barrier between him and the young people with whom he was continually thrown. He entered into the play of social amenities just as if he had never been away to New York, just as if he had never painted "The Wreck in the Offing."

The Quakers in their original doctrines had been very much opposed to music. It was never used in any of their meetings, and by many was looked upon as a device of the Evil One. With their continued cultural development, however, the Wilmington Quakers, except for a small sect which was extremely orthodox in its opinions, had developed a positive interest in music. This was especially true of those who, like the Pyles, had more or less given up their old religious affinities. The production of oratorios and cantatas and the like became regular occurrences. Everyone who could qualify with his voice was in great demand.

Howard Pyle had a rich tenor voice and considerable facility in using it that made him very popular in musical circles. Even in New York he had been regularly urged by Mr. Roswell Smith to lend his aid to the choir of the First Congregational Church. In Wilmington, on his return, he did not immediately turn his attention to any of these musical

festivities. After he had been home a few months, however, there arose an occasion when it would have been very undiplomatic for him to refuse to sing. A group of young intellectuals had established a lyceum, a sort of club, where literature and other cultural subjects could be weighed and discussed. This lyceum was about to have a picnic, and in elaborating the plans for the gay occasion, the members had decided that they must have some singing, since otherwise the day would not be complete. All details in regard to the chorus were arranged, but there was one vital lack; they needed another tenor. A helpful member mentioned the fact that young Pyle, who had just lately returned from New York, had an excellent tenor voice and suggested that he be asked to supply the deficiency in the chorus. Accordingly, Howard Pyle was pressed into service and told that the first rehearsal would take place at the Pooles', a family which he had known only in the way in which everyone knew everyone else in Wilmington in those days. On the appointed evening he went to the Pooles', where he was the first to arrive. Miss Anne Poole met him at the door. She did not know precisely who the strange young man was, but she readily guessed that he was the new tenor and therefore engaged him in conversation concerning some triviality of singing or of the weather. When the other singers came they found Miss Poole and Howard Pyle congenially talking and supposed, of course, that they were old friends. Consequently the evening's rehearsal went by and they were not introduced. And in Wilmington society in the late 'seventies for two people to become well acquainted without being properly introduced was a most unconventional thing. Nevertheless, it hap-



THE CHOICEST PIECES OF CARGO WERE SOLD AT AUCTION
From
NEW YORK SLAVE TRADERS
Harper's Magazine, 1895

pened in this case. The young lady had made so deep an impression that Howard Pyle found it convenient for him to call at the Poole house very frequently. He was no longer a stranger there. In fact, his visits became more and more regular, and by July, 1880, the two young people had become engaged.

Howard Pyle now found it very necessary to ascertain whether or not he could make enough money to support two in the same manner in which Miss Poole had always lived, for it was inconceivable to him to think of marrying her unless he could give her everything which she had in her present home. To be sure, he was working regularly for *Harper's*, occasionally he had pictures in other magazines, and there was the prospect of *Robin Hood*. All things considered, he felt that he was justified, but first he must see Mr. Parsons. Miss Poole was spending the summer in Rehoboth, a little seaside town on the Delaware coast a few miles south of Cape Henlopen. He wrote to her on July 29th. ". . . That will make a hundred and thirty-five dollars worth of work since Monday at noon. I guess we ought to be able to live on that if I keep it up. . . . I want to write a letter to old Parsons and tell him of my future prospects. I would rather see him but that would take another day and—well I can't spare it just now. He ought to know, however, as he holds the loaf of bread from which we are to cut an occasional slice." But on second thought he did not write to Mr. Parsons; he concluded that it would be preferable to wait until business carried him to New York, and then to broach the all-important subject. In the meantime there were several

trips to Rehoboth, for that little village was only a hundred miles away.

Then about the middle of August he went to New York. Here is the account of the trip as it was sent to Rehoboth: "And now I am back from New York. . . . I went immediately down to 'The House' and saw Alden, the editor of the Magazine, about that New Brunswick trip. He seemed quite anxious for me to go but I represented to him that it was anything but a pleasure for me to travel alone to a country of which I knew nothing, to gather material of which I had no idea, to make an article of which I did not have the slightest conception. If I had a companion I might enjoy it and we might suggest items to one another. Whereupon I delicately insinuated Frost's name. But Alden did not snap at it in the least. He said that the 'House' was making complaints in regard to the expense of running the magazine and, as this would be an expensive trip, they could not afford to have two artists in the field at once; that he fully understood my disinclination to undertake the work alone, but yet was sorry that I could not do it. He reminded me that it was I myself that had first proposed the trip to him. That was very true and I had nothing to say, but I thought how circumstances were altered now. There followed some more parlance which it is needless to recapitulate here, and finally matters were compromised by the conclusion that if Mr. William H. Bishop would undertake the writing I should go along and do the illustrations. Bishop is a second-rate writer of considerable ability who has done many short stories for the *Atlantic Monthly* and other periodicals and has of late been writing a novel, I believe, for the above mentioned monthly. Alden

is to see whether he will go and if he does I must pull up stakes and toddle after him. I am to hear in a day or so.

"I then went in to see Old Parsons ('old' in the affectionate sense of the word). I told him of my happiness and he congratulated me, etc. . . . I then asked him just what my prospects were with 'The House.' He said, 'I shall speak to you very plainly on the subject, Pyle,' and then went on to say, 'The House' was complaining of the high prices they were paying for each edition of the magazine and that he did not know whether any changes would be made before Harry Harper returned from Europe or not. I felt my heart sink as he said this for it seemed as though it indicated a loosening of the ties between us. But he went on to ask how much work I thought ought to be guaranteed me. I told him I thought twenty-five hundred dollars a year. He said that when Harry came back from Europe (in a week or ten days) he would speak to him on the matter, and that he thought beyond all doubts I was safe to remain with them permanently no matter what changes were made. I felt very much disheartened and said to him, 'Do you think, Mr. Parsons, that I have made a mistake; that I have been too hasty and selfish and involved a girl who has hitherto been raised with every want satisfied in an affair with an uncertain future?' for I called to mind the case of William Morgan, an artist in New York, who started with the highest prospects when young and who now lives a life of bitter drudgery compared to which a hod-carrier's is heavenly. 'No,' said he, 'I don't think anything of the kind. (I try to repeat to you just what he said without false modesty or conceit.) I have seen your work from the start, and have seen it steadily improving. A man of

your talents is perfectly safe, barring any dispensation of Providence, and I should be perfectly willing to trust the future of any of my daughters to you and would do so without hesitation, and in saying that I say all that I can say.' He said that it was not likely that 'The House' would dispense with my services, but that even if they did I could make a better living in all likelihood than if I worked entirely for them."

After this encouraging opinion from Mr. Parsons, Howard Pyle started in to work with redoubled energy. Everything that could possibly strengthen his position he did; pictures, many of them the best that he had done thus far, were completed in much less time than it had formerly taken him; expeditions to neighboring points of interest were planned—the New Brunswick one would have carried him too far from Rehoboth—that they might provide material for new articles. It occurred to him that it might be well to have two good strings to his bow, that it would be prudent to make his relations with *Scribner's* somewhat more intimate than they had been of late. On September 16th he wrote to Miss Poole:

"I'm just teetotally tired out and that's a fact—and cross—ye Gods! but ain't I cross! I have just been to New York, which accounts for the milk in the cocoanut. Yes, I've been in New York attending to—our business, may I say? I did not feel entirely satisfied in going it blind by coming up to Stroudsburg, writing an article and running the chance of its being accepted, so I thought I would run on this morning and see the houses as to whether either of them would like to have such an article. As I am in a manner cutting loose from Harpers, I thought it the best plan

to see Scribners first, thinking it might be the means of renewing my foothold with them. To tell the truth, one of the reasons for the numerous fits of the 'blues' that I have had lately has been my uncertainty as to how Scribners regarded my desertion of them for the banner of Harpers'. I wrote to them, you know, telling them that I could now do work for them, but as I had not heard from Mr. Drake I began to fear that they had gone back on me. Hence my uncomfortable feelings. But I found that I was received with open arms, the blowing of trumpets, the killing of the prodigal for the return of the fatted calf. (I think that is a little mixed, but never mind.)

"Mr. Gilder, the acting editor-in-chief, was not there, but Johnson, the 'sub,' was and seemed to think very well indeed of the proposed matter, as did Drake, the art editor. Of course, Johnson did not like to take the responsibility of positively ordering the article himself so it looked a little bit uncertain. My intention had been to offer it to Scribners first and if they did not care for it, then to take it to Harpers, but Johnson did so seem to hate to let it go by, that I promised not to submit the matter to Harpers until I had heard from them. So as things now stand I am just exactly where I was this morning. No, not exactly, either. I feel I have established a foothold with them which is something—a great deal.

"Hang these quill pens! I like to write with them but they wear out so quickly—well, I'll take another.

"Johnson said that I should in all likelihood hear from them on Saturday. If they should not accept it I shall do it anyhow and run the risk of Harpers taking it.

"I felt fairly sick when I saw some of the designs that

Drake had in the art room. They lay all over mine with several yards to spare. H. P. will certainly have to work up if he means to keep with the crowd. I hate that fellow Blum's work but it is decidedly artistic in many ways. One can't form a just idea of it by seeing the engravings alone. Then there is a young fellow—a mere boy—doing landscapes, phew, mine are not a patch upon them. If I get up to Stroudsburg all right, I am just going to lay myself out to make good sketches or knock the bung out of the barrel.

"Drake says he is going to count on me to do lots of work for them; speaks of an article they want me to travel for, when I come back from the Water Gap.

"I stayed so long with Scribners that I had no time to see Harpers, but only just enough to run into the *Graphic* office on my way down to the ferry. I had sent on a sketch of my 'Christmas in the Old Times,' but since I had not heard from them, I finished it up without waiting. It seems that they think it is a little too tipsy a subject for them—in short, they don't like it. Disappointment? No. They did not object very strongly—only thought that perhaps something else might do better. They were very respectful, rather surprisingly so, I thought, in my present humble-spirited frame of mind. I think I shall send in the finished design and see if they won't care to have it as it is. . . ."

The result of the trip to Stroudsburg was an article, "Autumn Sketches in the Pennsylvania Highlands."¹ It was saturated with the spirit of nature, the sort of thing that John Burroughs could do infinitely better, but the decorations were exquisite. *Harper's* liked it, and it was pub-

¹ *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, December, 1881, vol. lxiv, p. 88.

lished in December of the next year. Then in November he was sent by *Harper's* into the Pennsylvania Dutch section to acquaint himself with the customs and habits of the peculiar people who live in the vicinity of Lancaster. Here some of his experiences, as he related them in letters to Miss Poole, were rather amusing:

"November 16, 1880.

" . . . I went around to a Dunker minister to talk things over. The minister seemed quite an intelligent man, but said that one Jacob Pfautz, living near Ephrata, would be the one to give me the most information, since he was both very intelligent and very well-informed, beside being a man of such entire leisure that to give information and to toddle about the country with me would be a positive luxury to him. Said Pfautz is a Dunker and knows all about the interesting spots. I want to stay with him if I can while I am gathering my material. I think he will be a lucky find and a godsend to me. . . . "

"November 17, 1880.

" . . . You see where I am (Ephrata)—and the name spelled right thanks to being printed. But I am not going to stay here—oh no! I am going back to Lancaster tonight. And I am going to stay in Lancaster and am going to get one meal at least in Lancaster. The unpronounceable proprietor of this Mount Vernon House told me today that this was a Dutch house, kept in Dutch style, and that I must help myself accordingly, which I did, to fat pork, turnips, diminutive sweet potatoes, dried peaches, and an indescribable pie, but oh my!—never mind, I won't say anything about my poor stomach just here. . . . I am going back

to Lancaster tonight, as I said, for dear only knows what the German bed may be. . . .

“And now for my absolute news. I find the natives here as hard to open as an oyster without a knife. Your mother was quite right. They do not expand with the geniality one might expect from the bucolic German. On the contrary they shut with the most persistent tenacity. I landed in Ephrata feeling—metaphorically speaking—like the Vizier’s son in the *Arabian Nights*, when he was suddenly transported into the desert with almost nothing on, so ill at ease was I. Mr. Bare had given me a letter to John (not Jacob) Pfautz, whom he represented as a man of great intelligence and knowledge of the German Baptists. I found at home a pleasant-faced German woman and a man with a long beard and a pendulous wen on his cheek. John was in the workhouse; she rang the bell and he came. He turned the letter over and over in his hands with a vague look on his face that gradually broke with some intelligence as he said that he remembered Dan Bare. He maundered on about his having books and things, but happened to forget what was in them. I confess I felt rather helpless when I considered this as a sample of extra-intelligence, but the pleasant-faced woman (his daughter) explained that the old man was getting childish—which made the old man mad.

“I had to give it up, so I walked up the road a piece to where one of the Bishops of the church lives, but he was not in. His wife informed me that ‘he’ll generally be here till (at) ten o’clock. I don’t think as he’ll be gone till very long.’ I waited an hour for him but no signs of his approach appeared—still, his wife every now and then dropped in to tell me that ‘he’s generally here till ten o’clock or a



WASHINGTON AND MARY PHILIPSE
From
COLONEL WASHINGTON
Harper's Magazine, 1896

little after. I guess he'll found somebodies down till the drain to talks,' or something of the kind. I left at eleven o'clock and went up to see another man in reference to the sisterhood, who referred me to another man who was not in town. So I went down to the Cloister to look at it. It was stunning. It would make an article of itself. I shall certainly devote most of mine to it. . . .

"Then I went down again to see the Bishop but found him as oysterlike as all the rest. But by that time I had my knife, so to speak, patience. I talked to him patiently and persistently, and he finally opened right succulently, so to speak. He gave me whole gobs of information, told me of many books of reference, and wound up by taking me over to the big meeting house in his queer little rickety gig, opening the place and showing me through generally. Just think of it! If I had been there last week I could have seen a love feast, but I missed that and there won't be another until next spring.

"Then I went down again to unintelligently intelligent friend Pfautz, applying to him also the oyster knife of patience, and he opened also in as great a degree as he was capable of doing, promising to show me through the Sisterhood Cloister tomorrow. . . . "

"November 18, 1880.

" . . . Ye Gods! What a time I have had! I came back and found my friend Pfautz waiting for me at the station according to promise—and very much good he did me. Item to be booked for future use: Never take a man to be a fool when he seems anxious to represent himself as being one. To use an expression of your mother's, 'These

people are smarter than they look.' At least, that is what is beginning to dawn upon me. When you begin to enquire of a Pennsylvania Dutchman about things with which he thinks you have no business and which concern him, his face assumes a stony 'expressionless expression,' so to speak, most exasperating and most hopeless to an impatient nature. My aged friend Pfautz showed himself quite agile and intelligent this morning. He talked to me and gave me quite an amount of information.

"He took me up to the Cloisters and pointed out the different buildings, giving quite a little lecture upon them. He took me in and introduced me to the chief sister, pleading in the most engaging fashion for permission for me to sketch. He took me around and introduced me to the minister, also pleading with him, and finally got full and limitless permission to make all the sketches I wanted. They told me yesterday that the chapel was locked up—so it was, but there was a back entrance and by that I was inserted.

"I think I can say without vanity that I made a complete 'mash' of the chief sister. I talked to her in the sweetest way I was capable of doing, and she answered me in English as broken as ancient Italian china. She was a very fat, dumpy specimen of humanity about sixty years old. She showed me all about the chapel and the cookhouse at the rear where the soup is cooked for the love feasts. She took me upstairs and downstairs, into crumbling cubbies and moulding pantries. We ascended grasping a rope in lieu of a banister. She introduced me to the other sisters of which there were three, exhibited my sketches and assumed complete ownership of yours truly. She showed me old

spinning machines, reels, dilapidated chairs, clocks inhabited by earwigs and things, flat wooden legs for stretching stockings upon, wooden candlesticks and Providence only knows what else.

"The minister who lives near asked me to dinner and a right good plain dinner it was. He was another one I took to be a stupid oaf at first, but who turned out to be quite an intelligent and not a badly informed man.

"Do you speak German?" said he.

"No, sir."

"Also not at all?"

"No, sir."

"Then I might scold you well without your knowing—ain't?" said he. I think I must have stared at him with the most absurd blankness, so surprised was I at his joke. . . .

"I have only one regret—I asked the old sister to sit to me for her portrait, but she declined. I begged, I implored, I argued with her for half an hour—but no go. She smiled, looked sheepish, and declined in the very best Pennsylvania Dutch.

"However, I got three sketches, all interiors—one of the chapel, one of an old clock beside a door which was about five feet high. All the doors in the house were about that altitude—to imitate the small and narrow way, friend Pfautz told me. . . ."

"November 19, 1880.

"Bur-r-r-ruh! but it was cold today. I managed to potter along tolerably well in the morning, sitting in the sun and sketching the old buildings of the Cloister. But when I undertook in the afternoon to go around and get another

view, sitting in the shade, I had to resign. I worked along for some time with stiff fingers and chilled bones, but when I got to painting and the water I was using froze in little cakes all over the picture, I absolutely could not go on. I would have stuck at it in spite of chilled fingers if it had not been for that.

" . . . I went in to warm my hands and the strict head sister took them into her own puffy palms in the most motherly way, saying with a surprised air 'dey is golt,' just as if it were a land of Egypt out in the shadow of the woodshed. I thought it a good time to bone her again about having her picture taken, but she still firmly declined in Pennsylvania Dutch. . . .

"As I could do no more at the buildings I went over to see my ancient friend Pfautz. I showed him the sketch I had made and he was interested. Then I asked him to sit for his picture. Here his daughter put in her word, objecting most strongly. I think the old man rather liked the idea. He had the queerest old trousers that might have been worn by Noah anterior to his cruise—yellow with age and patched with parti-colored remnants—oh! so picturesque! His daughter thought it would be ungodly to have his picture taken. I thought she meant ungodly for me to draw it. 'I'll take the responsibility,' I said. 'You better be responsible for yourself,' said she, 'one soul ought to be enough for you.' Then I quoted Scripture and she answered with twice as much. Then I appealed to the old man. 'She will scoldt me,' said he, 'and make it onpleasant.' To make a long story short I finally prevailed, provided I would not sketch more than his head.

"This was not exactly what I wanted, but half a loaf is better than no bread, so I acceded to this stipulation.

"The old man followed me out of the house when I was done. 'Vas you going to publish that in *Harper's Weekly*?' said he.

"*'Harper's Monthly*, if you will let me. I hope you won't object.'

"'Ho-no-no,' said he—then after a pause, 'but don't tell my daughter.'

"'Oh no.'

"Again he hesitated. 'You'll put my name, won't you?'

"'Why I don't know.'

"'I t'inks you petter—ain't my name's John B. Pfautz—John Bauer Pfautz—aigh? (with a rising inflection). And you might send me one of the papers—aigh?'"

The article which grew out of this work among the Dunkers was successfully completed, but was not published until nine years later. One cannot help wondering whether the amiable Pfautz lived to see his picture in the magazine.

After an autumn and winter of strenuous work, Howard Pyle proved to himself that he was capable of making a good living. Everything seemed to be well arranged. He was on good terms with both Harpers and Scribners; there was very slight difficulty in having either his stories or his pictures accepted; and then in addition to that, Harpers had recently started a new children's magazine, known as *Harper's Young People*, to which he was contributing regularly, since it offered him unbounded opportunities for his favorite work. He was amazingly happy, both that he had proven himself and that the future was brimming with

hope. On April 12, 1881, they were married, Howard Pyle and Anne Poole, with A. B. Frost acting as best man.

Then the work that meant his career really began in earnest; not that it had not been in earnest before, but now there was something more tangible in view, now there was a responsibility that gave motive force to his plans and ambitions. One of the first things undertaken was an illustrated edition of *Yankee Doodle*—a very rare book now—for Dodd, Mead & Company. It was done in color in a very crude way, for the methods of color reproduction were by no means refined in 1881. It was full of a quaint and sprightly kind of humor, and was sufficiently successful to be followed up by *The Lady of Shalott*, done in the same manner. But whereas in so vigorous a subject as *Yankee Doodle* the imperfect coloring made little difference, in this new book with its romantic fervor and intensity it meant a cheapening and vulgarizing of the pictures. *The Lady of Shalott* was a book which Howard Pyle always looked back upon with horror. Nothing would have suited him better than to see every copy destroyed. His critical standards were always high; he would have withdrawn the book at the time of publication had it been possible.

The *Robin Hood* was published in 1883. It was a masterpiece of writing for children, and incidentally a masterpiece of printing and binding. Every detail had been carefully attended to by Howard Pyle himself. It was so beautiful a book, and so much care and expense had been lavished upon it, that its price had to be, unfortunately, too high for it to become at once a popular book. But as time went by it sold in increasing numbers, and in the eyes of many has remained its author's most perfect work. The



WASHINGTON AND NELLIE CUSTIS

From

THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Harper's Magazine, 1896

structure and peculiar charm of the book will be taken up in more detail in a later chapter, but it must be remembered here that with its publication Howard Pyle at once rose into the ranks of the foremost illustrators and writers for children.

During the first years after the marriage, Mrs. Pyle spent the summers at Rehoboth, while Mr. Pyle worked in Wilmington, but every week-end and whenever there was a lull in his work, he would steal away to the shore. In Wilmington many things were accomplished: innumerable tales and fairy stories for *Young People* with delightful pen-and-inks to go with them; historical stories and pictures for *Harper's Weekly*; and many heterogeneous illustrations for the *Monthly*. All this kept him fairly busy, but he was never one to waste a moment, no matter how much work he had done in a day. Every minute was filled with something. Even while he was drawing he would have some one read to him whenever it was possible. In one letter he mentions the fact that he was having read aloud *The Descent of Man*—and this, too, when he was working on some of the most lovely pictures that were later to be included in *The Wonder Clock*.

The studio which he was to use for the rest of his life was built in 1883. He had it erected on Franklin Street between Delaware and Pennsylvania Avenues. He spent a great deal of time in planning it; it was to be just the studio that he had always dreamed of—large, practical, and comfortable.

Although his reputation was now firmly established, although he was hailed on all sides as one of the coming masters of his craft, he still occasionally had hours of de-

pression which are very reminiscent of the early years in New York. On July 17, 1883, he wrote to Mrs. Pyle, who was at Rehoboth: "I sit here this evening a right up and down *blue* man. Why am I so blue? That I can't tell thee; thee knows how I get such spells upon me; one of them is upon me now. I have had a day of enforced—I might almost say—idleness through the failure of Harpers to send the Higginson MS. that they must forward. Beside this, my drawing for Butler (the Philadelphia publisher) has not turned out what I could have desired. It is too good to do over again and yet is almost too bad to send away. I want to get it out of the house for I hate the sight of it when I come into the studio. I don't know whether it is the hot weather or whether it is thy being away that upsets me, or whether I am going backward in my work, but certainly it seems to me that I do not draw so well now as I did three months ago. I really am very much inclined to write to Mr. Parsons and ask him to send me away somewhere on a trip so that I can get away from the jog-trot drudgery of *manufacturing* pictures for two or three weeks. If I have a change, perhaps I can tackle my work again with more vim and go when I come back to it again." Then on the following day: "Bad luck today. No MS. from Harpers. . . . Rubbed off from my picture that which I did yesterday, and think it looks better. I shall send it away tomorrow without touching it any more—I hope. . . ."

These spells, however, were never of long duration, and were the inevitable snares into which he could not help falling. It was impossible for him to do such great quantities of work and at the same time to have such high critical faculties, without feeling a certain dissatisfaction with some

of the things which he produced. For the most part these years were very happy. His home life was delightful; there were children to enliven it, and all the time he could not be insensible to the leaps and bounds which his reputation was making.

CHAPTER V

"MAGIC CASEMENTS"

*H*OWARD PYLE'S productions are so varied, covering so many fields that are only slightly related to one another, that it has seemed best to treat separately in the majority of the remaining chapters each important phase of his work, rather than to attempt to give in chronological detail the record of his achievements. There are certain advantages of clarity and order which must necessarily be lost, since it is impossible to cover the different aspects of his work in the proper sequence, but the greater distinctness given to his chief contributions, both to art and to literature, seems to warrant this departure from the time element.

He had been in New York only a short time when he discovered that the greatest charm of his literary work lay in the deftness of its appeal to children. At first nearly all that he did was in the form of animal fables, many of which Mary Mapes Dodge accepted for *St. Nicholas*, and in which she undoubtedly recognized evidences of ability that would probably develop into a real power of writing for young people, for she encouraged him in fostering this talent, encouraged him perhaps a little too much, for, as the diary letters show, he was almost tempted to devote himself exclusively to letters and allow his art to deteriorate. From this he was fortunately saved by the salutary influence of Church and some of his other early comrades, but the fact

that he could write for children with a charm that was possessed by few men was always present in his mind. As time went by this ability increased, and with it he developed the power of drawing pictures to illustrate his children's pieces, pictures that were as full of appeal to the young mind as were the stories themselves. Equipped with this double ability, he could always claim the attention of the children; all he needed was something to write about.

Fairy tales had always fascinated him when he was a child. His mother had read to him all that could be found and he was saturated with their spirit. Now, when he in turn was about to provide amusement for children he harked back to his own childhood and remembered the great allurements which the land of faery had held. He delved into old, musty sources, he explored the mystery of the folk tale, and in this treasury of fanciful plots he found enough material to provide great quantities of entertainment, as well as considerable instruction which he never failed to make palatable. In one of the diary-letters under the date of November 26, 1876, he tells his mother about the host of ideas he has found, and incidentally gives a glimpse of his own enthusiasm for fairy tales:

" . . . I took Thorp's *Northern Mythology* out of the Mercantile Library. It is a dry and prosy collection of medieval legends, many of which I have selected to make note of, and I shall try whether I can infuse a little fairy-tale juiciness into them. It is a rich mine to select from, though a dull book to read. It gives a full and complete account in a dry, pedantic manner of dwarfs, trolls, kabouter-mannekens, nixen, ghosts and goblins. I shall make note of a great many, hoping that some of these dry grains may

fall on ground rich enough to produce a full-grown fairy tale or two. As I have some time this Sunday I will jot down a couple of them, briefly, if it will not bore thee.

“At an annual fair in Alsace when all was merry with dancing and gayety, three of the loveliest damsels the world ever saw made their appearance. Soon, each youth bewitched by their beauty left his own sweetheart and crowded around the fair strangers. One of the fairest of them took a zither and sang so ravishingly that the listeners held their very breaths at the enchanted music. When the clock in the church tower struck the hour of midnight, the three sisters hurried away through the moonlit forest glades and were quickly lost to sight. One youth was desperately smitten with love, and accordingly, when the three beautiful sisters appeared the following night at the village gate, he secured the glove of the most beautiful while she entered the dance with one of his comrades. When the hour of midnight arrived, the damsel cried, ‘Where is my glove?’ ‘I have it,’ cried the lucky youth, ‘and shall keep it as a favor from you.’ At this the damsel commenced to wail piteously, at the same time wringing her hands in agony. In spite of her cries, as the night was advancing, the two sisters dragged the third off, followed by the youth, who kept them in sight. At length they arrived at a stream deep in the midst of the forest, where two of the damsels instantly disappeared, while the third, falling on her knees, besought the youth for her glove, though in vain, for he still kept it. At that moment the cock crowed and the damsel instantly vanished with a scream, and imagine the youth’s horror when the brook instantly became filled with

blood. (Isn't there something suggestive in that, don't thee think?)

"These nixen are magic musicians and can play upon the violin so that the trees and stones will dance. A man desiring to learn this wonderful performance brought, one St. John's eve, to the mill, a black cock which he threw into the pond, he himself standing with his back to it. Soon the nixen came and touched his hand and the man could play as no one in the village could. He was not content with this, however; so the next St. John's night he took a black cat and in a like manner threw it, too, into the mill pond. Soon the nixen came and touched his forearm, and now the man could play as no one in the world could. But even this did not content him; so next St. John's night he took a black lamb and threw it into the pond. This time the nixen came and touched the man's elbow and instantly his arm commenced to work in spite of himself and he produced the most wonderful music that ever was heard. But when he would cease playing he found he could not. In spite of himself his elbow kept working and he continued playing. All that night and all the next day and all the following night he continued, until a swineherd who was a wise man came, and standing behind him cut the fiddle strings across; when he instantly ceased. From that moment, though, he lost all power of playing on the violin. (I confess I cooked this up a little, and with some additions, such, for instance, as his violin making everyone dance that heard it, until the swineherd, stopping his ears with wax, was able to cut the fiddle strings, it might make quite an amusing, as well as laughable, story. Don't thee think so?) I'll put in one more and if they bore thee too much thee needn't read it.

"A maiden of Antwerp was wronged and deserted by a soldier. Meditating revenge, she consulted a wise woman who gave her a glass of white wine and, placing an ace of hearts upon it, directed the young woman to pierce the spot directly in the center with a needle. She did so and three drops of blood fell into the wine. That same night at the same hour the soldier, who was carousing with some of his companions, instantly fell dead and a deep wound was found in the region of his heart. (This might serve for an *event* if it were doctored up sufficiently; it is quaint as well as somewhat awful in its way, and I never heard a similar.)

"But I'll not trouble thee farther, although some of the stories of trolls and kaboutermanneken are funny in the extreme, and could be woven, with some shaping, into amusing and quaint stories by combining two or three of them together. And *what* illustrations they would make! I think I see myself turned loose in a boundless wilderness of quaint dwarfs, ugly trolls, ridiculous kaboutermanneken, and lively elves, with here and there a spicy smack of the awful in the shape of a hobgoblin or two. Don't I rather think I'd do something? I can't resist the temptation of telling one, just one story more.

"A troll wife came to a peasant woman and begged the loan of a beer mug for a troll wedding that was to come off that night. The woman lent the measure to her upon the condition that she might witness the ceremony. The troll wife consented and told her when the clock struck twelve to peep down into a crack in the hearthstone, but by no means to speak or laugh. The woman did as she was told and saw the most wonderful sight. Within a



ESCAPE OF ARNOLD
From
GENERAL WASHINGTON
Harper's Magazine, 1896

great apartment, the columns of which were of pure crystal, while gems and gold and silver spangled the walls, the trolls were making merry. They were quaint little fellows in gay jerkins and great, red, pointed caps. Every moment as the beer disappeared, the fun grew proportionately more uproarious. At length two of the dwarfs fell to quarreling and from that fell to blows, climbing up on the table to give freer swing to their arms. In the excitement of their fight they both eventually tumbled head over heels into a great bowl of soup. ‘Baxey and Waxey have tumbled into the soup bowl,’ cried the mannekins with shrieks of laughter, as the two miserable trolls clambered out of the well dripping with soup. They looked so comical that the woman, forgetting herself, broke into a hearty laugh; at the moment everything disappeared, while she received a severe box on the ear. How excellently that might illustrate; the trolls carousing, the two little creatures tumbling into the soup bowl. Preserve us Moses! there goes twelve o’clock at night and here I sit needlessly chatting, not even recollecting that I have to take a bath this evening—good-night!”

This extract is merely an example of the lure which fairy stories had for him. Naturally, when they were so delightful to him, he turned to them for the materials of some of his first work. In April, 1877, the story of “Hans Gottenlieb, the Fiddler,” the outline of which is well developed in the selection from the diary-letters, was published in *St. Nicholas*, and with it began the long period of the writing of fairy tales. There followed for nine or ten years an almost never broken series of them, first in *St. Nicholas*, then in *Harper’s Young People*, and finally in book

form. Although he turned his attention to many other kinds of work in the meantime, still the fairy stories continued to pour forth. At first they were, like "Hans Gottenlieb," mere retellings of old legends; they were the old plots put into slightly more modern form. Gradually, however, he built up a technique of story telling; from the skeleton of an old folk tale he would develop a story, so replete with details, and so changed to suit his own ideals, that one could scarcely recognize the framework of the original tale. Then, finally, after so much experience in the school of adaptation, he launched out for himself, inventing his own plots. A fairy tale to him meant more than an impossible story, the scene of which was laid in a fanciful country where grotesque figures and fantastic deeds were the order of the day; all the old machinery of fairyland he used, to be sure, but with it he always combined a touch of the moral, never heavy and nearly always artistic. Such beautiful opportunities were offered in his world of make-believe for the propounding of useful, everyday bits of common sense, that he could not keep himself from including them. They came as naturally as "flies in the summer time," as he humorously observes in regard to something else.

The spirit of fairy tales was so embedded in his character, and with it the method of making a point by using them, that even in his correspondence he would occasionally introduce them. A lovely example, showing not only this, but also his kindly interest in all children and incidentally something of his attitude toward himself, is afforded by a letter to a certain Mrs. Dickinson who had written requesting a picture of him for her children:

"January 18, 1888.

"My Dear Mrs. Dickinson:

"A long while ago—March of last year—you wrote me a letter asking me for my photograph and autograph. My neglect to answer immediately arose not from indifference toward your request but because I had had no photograph taken for so long a time that I felt a reluctance toward having myself projected upon material cardboard, fearing the result. At last, however, I have had it done and such as it is I send it to you. I imagine to myself the little ones looking at it in far away Wisconsin. 'What!' they cry, 'is that Howard Pyle? Why, he is bald! He is gray! and—yes—if one looks closely enough one finds lines at the corners of his eyes that the photographer has forgotten to obliterate with his pencil!'

"My dears, your mother would have me send you my photograph. I cannot help being as I am. Listen and I'll tell you a fable:

"Once upon a time in a country far away over the seas and mountains in the further borders of *Nowhere*, where little pigs run around ready roasted and apple pies grow in the trees and turkeys run around with cruets of oyster sauce on their backs and all the pebbles are marbles and candies can be had for the asking (and it's a fine country I can tell you) there lived a people who had all that they wanted provided they didn't want too much.

"Now, nobody had ever seen the king of that country and this was why:

"First of all there was a grand and beautiful castle as big as I am and all made of gold and silver.

"Then there was a room inside of the castle and the

carpets of the room were of silk and satin interwoven in beautiful patterns with threads of gold and silver, and the walls of the room were of moss agate and the windowpanes of diamonds, so that it was as fine a room as you ever saw in your little lives.

"Then in the middle of the room was a table of ebony and gold, studded all over with pearls and sapphires and rubies and what not and I wish that I had one like it.

"Then on the table was a golden casket which I would describe like the rest, only that my gold and jewels have given out!

"And in the casket was the King and nobody had ever seen him. 'He is the greatest and noblest king in all the world!' said the people of *Nowhere*; but you know as well as I do why they said that. You do not? Why, I have just told you—it was because they had never seen him.

"Well, one day a stranger came traveling into that land.

"'But what is your King like?' said he.

"'We don't know,' said the people of *Nowhere*, 'we never saw him.'

"'I don't believe there is a king,' said the stranger.

"'Oh yes there is,' said the people of *Nowhere*, 'for yonder is his palace and you can see it with one eye shut.'

"'Yes,' said the stranger, 'that's all very well but there's many a nutshell without a kernel,' and then the stranger showed that he had more sense than he appeared to have.

"The people of *Nowhere* were more silly than we are hereabouts, so that a few words like those that the stranger dropped were enough to set their heads a-buzzing. No, nothing would do them now but to see that same King of theirs; for it would be a pity if they should not be able

to tell what he was like if another stranger should come traveling that way asking foolish questions like this other. So one day the high state officers and the nobility and gentry went to pay a visit to the palace for the express purpose of seeing this King of theirs.

"The High Councillor walked straight up to the golden casket and laid his hand upon it. He was dreadfully frightened but, all the same, he was bound to see to the bottom of the business, so he shut both eyes and opened the lid of the box.

"Everybody held his breath and opened his eyes like saucers.

"There was a rustle, a squeak, a whir and—*out popped a little mouse no bigger than your thumb.*

"My dear children, it was a sight to see the people of *Nowhere* when a body said 'King' to them. When they said 'King' to themselves each thrust his tongue into his cheek and winked one eye.

"But if you wish to know whether the King of *Nowhere* really was a mouse, or whether some wag had played a trick upon the good folk who came to the palace that day, you will have to ask somebody who knows more than I.

"Anyhow, I can tell you this much for the truth and sure and certain:

"It is best not to inquire too closely into a closed casket, for the people of *Nowhere* are not the only folk who have discovered that their King was only a mouse after all.

"But all this has nothing to do with writing a letter and so, madam, I am

"Yours very truly,

"HOWARD PYLE."

The pictures that he drew for his fairy stories were beyond comparison. As they appeared in the pages of *St. Nicholas* and *Harper's Young People* they made the illustrations by other hands appear crude and commonplace. He had completely obliterated the "taint of vulgarity" and coarseness that had given him so much worry in the early days.

These were pictures that defied analysis; they were crowded with haunting glimpses of glorious old castles, with jolly peasants whose faces shone with good humor, with princesses superbly beautiful and with quaint little gnomes and trolls, fascinatingly garbed in picturesque clothes. They were enough of themselves to endear him to the hearts of all the children who saw them. It was no wonder that his name became almost a household word with the younger generation.

About the middle of 1883 he conceived the idea of writing humorous verses, printing them out by hand and decorating them with pen-and-ink drawings on the same page. In a letter to his wife he first mentions his scheme: ". . . I wrote a verse for *Harper's Young People* which I propose making into a full page. If Harpers should take to it, as I hope they will, I propose writing a number of similar bits (say fifty) and turning them into a child's gift book next Christmas a year, first publishing them in *Young People*. . . ."¹ Harpers did like it; in fact they considered it an excellent scheme. But it was a scheme fraught with difficulties for the artist; it was tedious and trying work. He wrote to Mrs. Pyle: ". . . This morning I started drawing that series of full-page pictures with verses that

¹ To Mrs. Howard Pyle, July 8, 1883.

I hope to do for *Young People*, to be published ultimately in book form. I told you yesterday how I hammered away at the verses and only hit one late in the afternoon. I hope that they may be successful. I did hard conscientious work today but got only a very little done. . . . This afternoon I had a sort of discouraged fit, for the work I was doing seemed so puerile and childish; but I feel differently now, for after all no work conscientiously done is 'childish';¹ and later: " . . . On Saturday I resumed work upon the illustrated verse. It progresses much more slowly than I had hoped. The printing of the letters of the text takes a long time and I had several setbacks through mistakes. . . . " ² Finally, in spite of all these little difficulties both of composition—for Howard Pyle always found the verse medium unwieldy—and of the manual strain of printing, twenty-four of the little verses were finished. They had appeared regularly in the magazine and had been uniformly successful with its readers. When the time came for gathering them into a book, it was concluded that a number of stories of the typically humorous, fantastic sort should be combined with them, and they were to appear under the title of *Pepper and Salt, or Seasoning for Young Folk*. On July 28, 1885, Howard Pyle wrote to his wife: " . . . I feel that the book is really shaping itself now. Everything seems to be going along smoothly and Harpers adopt all my suggestions. The only difference that seems to arise between us is in regard to the cost. I want it to be a cheap child's book, but I am afraid the inclination with them is to make it rather expensive. I do hope they will not fall into the pit that Scribners and I did with *Robin Hood*."

¹ To Mrs. Howard Pyle, August 3, 1883.

² To Mrs. Howard Pyle, August 5, 1883.

The book was published in 1886, the first of the author's collections of fairy stories. Unfortunately, it was not very successful with the general public, perhaps because it was too costly, but it was, nevertheless, a genuine work of art, well arranged, bristling with good pictures, and sparkling with a quaint, kindly humor. Its main purpose was to provide entertainment pure and simple; the morals added to the tales and verses increased rather than diminished the broad appeal. The preface in which Howard Pyle dramatizes his own feelings and his desires was a genuine bit of inspiration, and since it gives so clearly the author's spirit of intoxicating humor and the whole scope of the book, it is well worth quoting:

"Here, my little man, you may hold my cap and bells, and you, over there, may hold the bauble! Now, then, I am ready to talk as a wise man should and am a giddy-pated jester no longer!

"This is what I have to say:

"One must have a pinch of seasoning in this dull, heavy life of ours; one should never look to have all the troubles, the labors, and the cares, with never a whit of innocent jollity and mirth. Yes; one must smile now and then, if for nothing else than to lift the corners of the lips in laughter that are only too often dragged down in sorrow.

"It's for this that I sit here now, telling you all manner of odd quips and jests until yon sober wise man shakes his head and goes his way, thinking that I am even more of a shallow-witted knave than I really am. But, prut! Who cares for that? I am sure that I do not if you do not.

"Yet listen! One must not look to have nothing but pepper and salt in this life of ours—no, indeed! At that



IN THE OLD RALEIGH TAVERN
From
AT HOME IN VIRGINIA
Harper's Magazine, 1896

rate we should be worse off than we are now. I only mean that it is a good and pleasant thing to have something to lend the more solid part a little savor now and then!

"So, here I'll sit; and, perhaps, when you have been good children, and have learned your lessons or have done your work, your mother will let you come and play a little while with me. I will always be ready and waiting for you here, and I will warrant your mother that I will do you no harm with anything that I may tell you. If I can only make you laugh and be merry for a little while, then my work will be well done, and I will be glad in the doing of it.

"And now give me my cap and bells again, for my wits are growing cold without them: and you will be pleased to reach me my bauble over there, for I love to have him by me.

"Will you be seated? And you, over there, seat the baby on the grass! Are you ready? Very well: then I will tell you a story, and it shall be about the 'Skilful Huntsman.'"

Then from this delightful preamble, one is plunged at once into the pleasantries of fairyland. It is an admirable beginning, and done in a fashion that immediately captivates both the adult who may be reading aloud and the child who is listening.

The style in which the stories are written is deserving of a word of praise. It is loose and rambling; there are no long and involved sentences, almost never a subordinate clause. It flows steadily along with no difficult decorations, no attempt to make the phrases tell a story in themselves. The narrative is slowly unfolded; simply and without turnings one event leads up to another with such clear-

ness that the most immature mind can easily follow. Yet every word tells, every word is chosen with the precision that only a mind well acquainted with children, a mind initiated into the secrets of child life, could have. The author never nods to his grown-up readers as if to say "See how cleverly I do this,"—a trait which Professor Phelps condemns in Hendrik Van Loon. It would not be too high praise, when all these points are taken into consideration, to say that for its purpose the style is perfect.

Pepper and Salt had not even made its appearance before there began to be talk of another fairy book. In a letter to his wife he first mentions it—the early part of the letter is wholly extraneous to the subject in hand, but is left untouched because of its general interest:

" . . . I then went into Mr. Parsons' room and told him that he *must* give me work to do as otherwise I would be at a standstill just now. The poor old gentleman told me that he had been so involved in the whirlpool of the Grant business that everything else was going to the dogs. He said that they were engaged upon twenty-two full page designs upon that subject; that they had interviewed General Hancock and all those prominently concerned, had gathered every statistic and *already had views of the procession drawn from the important points.*

"It struck me that this was a trifle previous and I asked Mr. Parsons what they would do if it rained. He said that they had thought of that—that the sky was not made a dead white but was tinted so they could turn it either into a clear day, a gentle shower, or a driving rain, as they chose. The crowd was depicted as carrying sun-umbrellas which could be changed into rain-umbrellas if the need should arise.

"While in the room I saw another example of the Harper enterprise, a large engraved head of Gladstone and another of 'Uncle' Sammy J. Tilden. I asked if either of these great men were sick. Mr. Parsons said no, *but there was no knowing when they might be as they were both growing old!* I told him that I was glad that I was not hung in their picture gallery yet, for it was too suggestive of the graveyard.

"After having my wishes for work granted I wandered down stairs. I felt that I had thoroughly exhausted Mr. Parsons and I longed for another victim to bore. Mr. Harry Harper was there. I haven't seen him for a long time, but as I wasn't sure whether he had been to Europe, or Cochinchina, or Weehauken, I felt a certain delicacy in conversing freely with him about it. He received me, so to speak, with open arms, insisted upon my sitting down and would have led me on to talk. However, all that I came to talk about was the business of *Pepper and Salt*. He agreed with me entirely that it ought not to be an expensive book—said that he would like it not to cost over a dollar and a half. I don't think, however, that it will be as cheap as that as they seem inclined to use a very fine grade of paper, the same as that used in Abbey's *Herrick*. He asked me why I wasn't looking to get out another book for Christmas a year. I told him that I was quite willing to do it, but that I did not want to crowd the mourners, so to speak. He replied that there was no crowding in the matter, whereupon his desire seemed whetted. . . ."¹

A book was accordingly planned, but was not published until 1888. Again it was a collection of fairy tales, entitled

¹ To Mrs. Howard Pyle, August 4, 1885.

The Wonder Clock, and was embellished with a series of twenty-four delightful little verses by the author's sister, Miss Katherine Pyle. The stories were of the same general character as those which had made up *Pepper and Salt*, but the workmanship was, if anything, better. There was even more charm, even more polish, and a much greater variety in subject. According to the plan of the book, every hour brought forth a new tale from the dilapidated old Wonder Clock which stood in Time's garret. Here again princesses and kings lived in the land of make-believe, the great Red Fox and Grandfather Mole talked with truly human sagacity. This book was an immediate success; its total lack of affectation made it an instant favorite. Howard Pyle himself always considered it his best book of fairy tales. It is interesting to note that the book has continued to grow in popularity through the years rather than to diminish. Six times as many copies were sold in 1919 as in 1889.

After the publication of the *Wonder Clock* there followed a period when the other phases of Howard Pyle's genius kept him from turning his attention to the realms of faery. It was not until 1895 that the third and last book of this nature, *Twilight Land*, appeared. Although in many ways it was an excellent collection of tales, it seemed to lack the inspiration of the two preceding volumes. Laurence Hutton claimed that one of the stories, "The Talisman of Solomon," was one of the best that the author had ever written, but this could hardly be said of the rest of the book. The old fairy-tale zest which had been the distinguishing feature of *The Wonder Clock* and *Pepper and Salt* had to a certain extent passed away; Howard Pyle's mind was more occupied with other things. Still, this is not a book to be con-

sidered slightly; it is, as has been said, a charming series of stories; it merely suffers because both *The Wonder Clock* and *Pepper and Salt* made their appearance before.

Though Howard Pyle's contribution to the literature of fairies came to an end with *Twilight Land*, the *Garden Behind the Moon*, which was published in the same year is, to be sure, in reality a fairy tale. It is something more, however. It is an allegory, and it is the allegorical side of it that is striking, that completely eclipses the fairy-tale element. With his three books of fanciful tales, however, Howard Pyle established himself as a master of the form. His tales were written and illustrated with a perfection that can only be marveled at; the duality of his genius placed him head and shoulders above his contemporary rivals. And throughout all of his tales there are no crudities, no useless cruelties, no inharmonious or evilly suggestive scenes such as are to be found in so many purely mythical stories. As one grateful parent wrote him, "we never have to skip a word."

There is one other book which can be most conveniently treated here. It is *A Modern Aladdin*, which, while not strictly speaking a fairy tale, is so highly romantic, so deliciously extravagant that it can easily be grouped with them. This is not primarily a child's book; it has its strongest appeal, perhaps, to young people in their teens, but it is quite capable of entrancing those who are much older. It is an account of the amazing adventures of a young French peasant whom the Comte de St.-Germaine, that mysterious figure in polite French history, claimed as a nephew. In spite of the rapidity of the story, Howard Pyle had considerable difficulty in persuading anyone to accept it. Mr. Burlingame would not have it for the newly founded *Scrib-*

ner's Magazine. Mr. Alden was by no means anxious to place it in *Harper's*; finally, however, it was accepted by *Harper's Bazar*, where it appeared in 1891, gayly decorated with the most delicate pen-and-inks. The story reminds one irresistibly of Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights*, so much so that it is most interesting to read in one of the letters of R. L. S. to Mrs. Charles Fairchild in March, 1892, "I thought *Aladdin* capital fun; but why, in fortune, did he pretend it was moral in the end? The so-called nineteenth century *où va-t-il se nicher*? 'Tis a trifle, but Pyle would do well to knock the passage out, and leave his bogey tale a bogey tale, and a good one at that."

While it is true that the moral in this story could easily be left out, as Stevenson suggests, it is by no means so graceless as he would imply. It was there for the same reason that it figured in all the fairy tales. Howard Pyle found it impossible to resist the instinct that urged him to include it. Rather than blame him, let him be commended for having invariably done it with such exquisite finish.

CHAPTER VI

THE MIDDLE AGES

*T*HERE is an appreciable link between Howard Pyle's stories of fairyland and his work in the period of the Middle Ages, by which term is not meant necessarily the definite historical era which goes by that name, but a somewhat imaginary time when knights and ladies experienced unusual adventures, when chivalry was an undeniable fact of society, when kings and princes found occasion to hobnob with less high-born individuals. The general spirit is very similar to that which finds its expression in *The Wonder Clock*; there is the same good humor, the same briskness and buoyancy, and the same keen interest in fanciful plots. But to these characteristics are added others: real historical personages figure actively, and the stories are based, at least partly, on materials which have been handed down from the Middle Ages themselves, on the great tradition of medievalism. Perhaps the nearest approach to similarity, however, lies in the pictures which accompany each venture into the field. In them appear the same resplendent ladies, and knights in gorgeous armor, looking as if each has been transported from some fairy isle. Since the first of these books is the *Robin Hood*, and since in the preface Howard Pyle himself expresses the spirit of the book, it is quoted in full:

"You who plod so amid serious things that you feel it shame to give yourself up even for a few short moments to mirth and joyousness in the land of Fancy; you who think that life hath nought to do with innocent laughter that can harm no one; these pages are not for you. Clap to the leaves and go no farther than this, for I tell you plainly, that if you go farther you will be scandalized by seeing good, sober folks of real history so frisk and caper in gay colors and motley, that you would not know them but for the names tagged to them. Here is a stout lusty fellow with a quick temper, yet none so ill for all that, who goes by the name of Henry II. Here is a fair, gentle lady before whom all the others bow and call her Queen Eleanor. Here is a fat rogue of a fellow, dressed up in clothes of a clerical kind, that all the good folk call my Lord Bishop of Hereford. Here is a certain fellow with a sour temper and a grim look—the worshipful, the Sheriff of Nottingham. And here, above all, is a great, tall, merry fellow that roams the greenwood and joins in homely sports, and sits beside the Sheriff at merry feast, which same bears the name of the proudest of the Plantagenets—Richard of the Lion's Heart. Besides these there are a whole host of knights, priests, nobles, burghers, yeomen, pages, ladies, landlords, beggars, pedlars, and what not, all living the merriest of merry lives and all bound by nothing but a few odd strands of certain old ballads (snipped and chipped and tied together again in a score of knots) which draw these jocund fellows here and there, singing as they go.

"Here you will find a hundred dull, sober, jogging places, all tricked out with flowers, and what not, till no one would know them in their fanciful dress. And here



ARRIVAL OF STUYVESANT IN NEW AMSTERDAM
From
COLONIES AND NATIONS
Harper's Magazine, 1901

is a country bearing a well-known name, wherein no chill mists press upon our spirits, and no rain falls but what rolls off our backs like April showers off the backs of sleek drakes; where flowers bloom forever and birds are always singing; where every fellow hath a merry catch as he travels the roads, and ale and beer and wine (such as muddle no wits) flow like water in a brook.

"This country is not Fairy land. What is it? 'Tis the land of Fancy, and is of that pleasant kind that, when you tire of it,—*whisk!*—you clap the leaves of this book together and 'tis gone, and you are ready for everyday life, with no harm done.

"And now I lift the curtain that hangs between here and No-man's-land. Will you come with me, sweet Reader? I thank you. Give me your hand."

The book appeared in 1883 and was enthusiastically received by artists and writers on both sides of the Atlantic. As Joseph Pennell says in his *Graphic Arts*: "The book made an enormous sensation when it came out here and even impressed greatly the very conservative William Morris, who thought up to that time . . . nothing good artistically could come out of America." In it you can almost breathe the air of a romantic Sherwood; you feel irresistibly that the life portrayed, while not precisely real, is so crowded with human incidents that as an imaginary state of things it was quite possible in early England, and absorbingly pleasant to read about. Robin Hood, Little John, Friar Tuck, Will Scarlet, all are intensely human personages, yet all move in an atmosphere that is brimming with fanciful notions.

The basis of the book lies in two collections of old ballads

which have been mentioned before—Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, and Ritson's *Robin Hood*. Howard Pyle took the old ballads, read and re-read them, became thoroughly conversant with every detail of plot and character that could be drawn from them. Then he set about the writing of his own book, bringing into harmonious play all the many sides of his own genius. Every character was humanized, the settings were made vivid and natural, new details of plot were added to bring the various episodes into clear relation with one another. The style is a very successful adaptation of archaic English, not so complex as to be hard to read, but sufficiently antique to lend the charm of age to the narrative. The descriptions of the countryside are superb; take for example this one: "The high-road stretched white and dusty in the hot summer afternoon sun, and the trees stood motionless along the roadside. All across the meadows the hot air danced and quivered, and in the limpid waters of the lowland brook, spanned by a little stone bridge, the fish hung motionless above the yellow gravel, and the dragon fly sat quite still, perched upon the sharp tip of a spike of rushes, with its wings glistening in the sun." What could give more accurately the spirit of listlessness of a hot summer's afternoon? The whole book is full of such passages, ideal in their simplicity and their truth. The most striking feature of the text, however, is the never-failing action; one exciting incident after another is related, each with an eye to the dramatic. It is a banquet of adventure that never palls on any child and in which grown-ups secretly find a great pleasure when they read it aloud to their children.

But perhaps the greatest charm of the book lies in its pictures. The large, full-page plates tell in full the story of Robin Hood, while delightful vignettes and highly decorative initial letters add glowing details. They were all done in pen and ink with consummate mastery. They are spirited and intimate; they illustrate the narrative without anywhere introducing a false note; they add to the text and never for a moment distract the attention. Yet the text would be incomplete without them. The only adverse criticism is perhaps that of Joseph Pennell in the statement, "Howard Pyle has given . . . in *Robin Hood* some beautiful ideas of a country he does not know." Be that as it may, a country was created which not only made a suitable setting for the story, but which seems today to be the ideal one for just that kind of imaginative literature. It is the very lack of realism that lends the proper tone of enchantment.

The ballads and songs which figure pleasingly throughout *Robin Hood* are largely Howard Pyle's own, although in a number of cases they are taken from Percy. He never looked back on these or on any other of his verse productions with any degree of satisfaction. The verse-medium, he thought, did not suit him. Yet some of them are graceful and light, with here and there a really lyric note, as in this song of Allan-a-Dale:

"Gentle river, gentle river,
Bright thy crystal waters flow,
Sliding where the aspens shiver,
Gliding where the lilies blow,

"Singing over pebbled shallows,
Kissing blossoms bending low,
Breaking 'neath the dipping swallows,
Purpling where the breezes blow,

"Floating on thy breast forever
Down thy current I could glide;
Grief and pain should reach me never
On thy bright and gentle tide.

"So my aching heart seeks thine, love,
There to find its rest and peace,
For, through loving, bliss is mine, love,
And my many troubles cease."

While there are spots in these lines which are obviously not from the pen of a cultivated poet, the whole serves admirably as a song from Allan-a-Dale, and is instinct with lyricism.

Many years later in replying to one of the many letters from the host of his child admirers, for, busy as he was, he almost never failed to answer these notes of commendation, Howard Pyle said that in looking back on his past work he felt that the *Robin Hood* was probably the only book of his which could in any sense be called a classic. There is no doubt today that *Robin Hood* deserves the rank he gives it; the only question is whether or not there are others which might be equally worthy of such opinions. Although the book was not immediately popular with the reading public at large, it gradually, slowly for a year or two and then very rapidly, grew to be one of the best sellers for children. By 1902, it was so well known and so appreciated, that the publishers—Charles Scribner's Sons—brought out a curtailed edition for schools, which has been used with great success throughout the country.

Otto of the Silver Hand, which was published in 1888, the same year which saw the birth of *The Wonder Clock*, is the second story of the Middle Ages. This time, however, the locale is changed; medieval Germany is the scene of the

action. It is the story of the adventures of a brave little fellow, living in the strenuous times of the baronial robbers who made the Rhineland a place of terror. Little Otto suffers nobly from the effects of the warfare between his father and a neighboring baron. Through it all he is unspoiled, he remains sweet and kindly. As a character, he is drawn with a precision of touch that cannot be equaled even in *Robin Hood*; he is a real child and one that unfailingly attracts the sympathy of other children. The impression which this story made is admirably shown in a letter from Hjalmar H. Boyesen,¹ dated January 12, 1889:

" . . . There is a note in your book—strong, wholesome, and sympathetic—far removed from sentimentality—but vibrating with true sentiment—in short it is a lovely book. The scene on the bridge where Baron Konrad calls out to his enemy Baron Henry: 'You were brave enough to cut off the hand of a little child; are you now brave enough to meet his father?' (or words to that effect) thrilled my boys. They shed a few furtive tears; and I am not sure but that their papa kept them company. It has the true dramatic ring; it is strong, self-restrained art.

"To me the illustrations seem marvelously done by a kind of historic second sight—or artistic divination—I don't know which. I know no children's book which I have enjoyed half so much. . . ."

It is particularly of the drawings of this book and their Düreresque qualities that Joseph Pennell speaks so enthusiastically in his *Pen Drawing and Pen Draughtsmen*:

"The most superficial comparison of Pyle's composition

¹ The Norwegian-American novelist and littérateur, author of *Falconberg*, *Goethe and Schiller*, etc.

and handling with Dürer's will show what a careful student the nineteenth-century American is of the sixteenth-century German. I admit, with certain American critics whom I respect, that in some qualities it is very hard to tell where Dürer ends and Howard Pyle begins. In his *Otto of the Silver Hand*, for example, there are compositions which are almost entirely suggested by Dürer. But who has not made use of the suggestions of other men? That Pyle should do this in telling and illustrating a medieval tale, merely proves his ability to saturate himself with the spirit of the age in which the scenes are laid, and to give his work the color and character of the biggest man of that age. . . . " And again: " . . . On looking through Howard Pyle's *Otto of the Silver Hand*, one finds the little tailpieces there have much the same motives and are carried out in much the same spirit, and yet are altogether original in subject, while they are reproduced mechanically with an ease that would have surprised Dürer. There is probably no draughtsman as successful as Howard Pyle in working in the manner of the sixteenth-century artists, always, however, adding something of his own. His medieval tales have given him good reason to adhere to the old models. The book I have just mentioned would not have been so appropriately illustrated with designs less conventional in treatment and more modern in feeling; the full pages, though reproduced by process, look like old wood blocks; the head and tailpieces might be mistaken at a glance for Dürer's. But that Pyle knows how utterly out of place these designs would be in books relating to other periods is proved by the very different methods he employs for other subjects. His *Pepper and Salt* gives an excellent idea of the

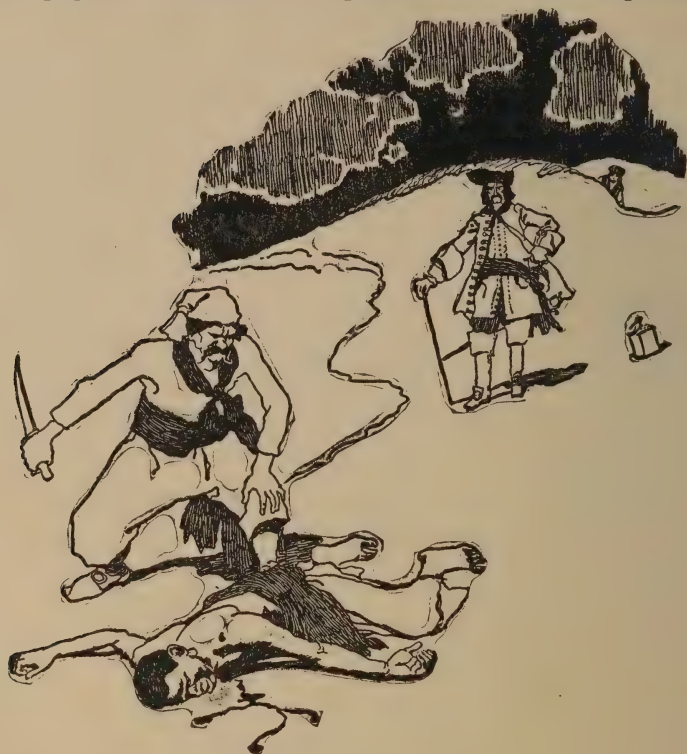
great extent of his knowledge and his perfect understanding of the limitations and possibilities of the decoration of a page. . . . ”

These quotations from Mr. Boyesen and from Mr. Pennell show the appreciation of a literary man and of an artist. Needless to say, the book was at once a success, and has remained very popular. It shows, perhaps, more insight into a child's life, more sympathy with and more understanding of the trials of childhood, and at the same time it is a piece of work more serious in tone than the *Robin Hood* or the fairy books. It does not have the same playful humor and the light fantasy, but succeeds altogether on account of the unerring truth of its character portrayal and the poignant feeling of pathos which is never for a moment allowed to grow commonplace.

The next book to be grouped with these is *Men of Iron*, a stirring tale of England in the troublous times of Henry IV. It is pure adventure, full of resounding arms, of tournaments, and knightly feats. Here there is little fancy; it is a romantic tale, which none the less gives a nearly accurate picture of the period. Myles Falworth, the son of a former supporter of the deposed Richard, regains through his own valor and nobility a position equal to that of his father, who had suffered as an adherent to the old order after the insurrection against Henry. It is a story to make any boy's ambition surge; true worth is the only criterion by which judgments are made; Myles makes his way solely through his own merits. Howard Pyle has shown his sense of fitness by making of it a straightforward story, vigorous and manly. The "strenuous life" of America is carried back to medieval England. Although it lacks the subtle

HOWARD PYLE: A CHRONICLE

artistry of *The Wonder Clock*, of the *Robin Hood*, or of *Otto*, it has, since its publication in 1892, been among the most popular of its author's productions. This is probably



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due to the fact that it is a racing, adventurous tale, and that it appeals to a greater number of people than do the more exquisite perfections of the fanciful books.

The illustrations to *Men of Iron* mark a great change. The pen-and-ink work which had been so successfully used in each of the preceding books was abandoned, and black-and-white oil reproduced by photographic process was used in its stead. They were very suitable pictures for the book. With this new medium Howard Pyle was able to get a more solid, a more realistic effect than could have been obtained with pen-and-ink, for the delicate lines of *Pepper and Salt* would have been out of place in this story of combat and bloodshed. At the time when the book appeared he was working on some illustrations for a new edition of Oliver Wendell Holmes's *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*—he had already made pictures for several of Holmes's books—and he sent a copy of his latest production to the doctor. The note of appreciation from Dr. Holmes is very interesting, as coming from one of the oldest American men of letters then living:

“November 9, 1893.

“My Dear Mr. Pyle:

“I have received some time ago your little book, *Men of Iron*. I have not read the story—I do not pretend to read the books sent me—it would take all and more than all of my time to do it. But I have looked at the illustrations which seem to me unusually fine. I have seen no book with such striking illustrations for a long while. There is none of the hurried slap-dash air which is so common since the ‘impressionists’ have splashed their colors about on the canvas, but honest work and careful study.

“I am very much pleased with my little book, which I think proves generally acceptable. The ‘One Hoss Shay’

is admirable and many of the pictures are suggestive and effective. That old witch in the Essex woods comes before me whenever I drive through the favorite road which goes from Manchester to Essex.

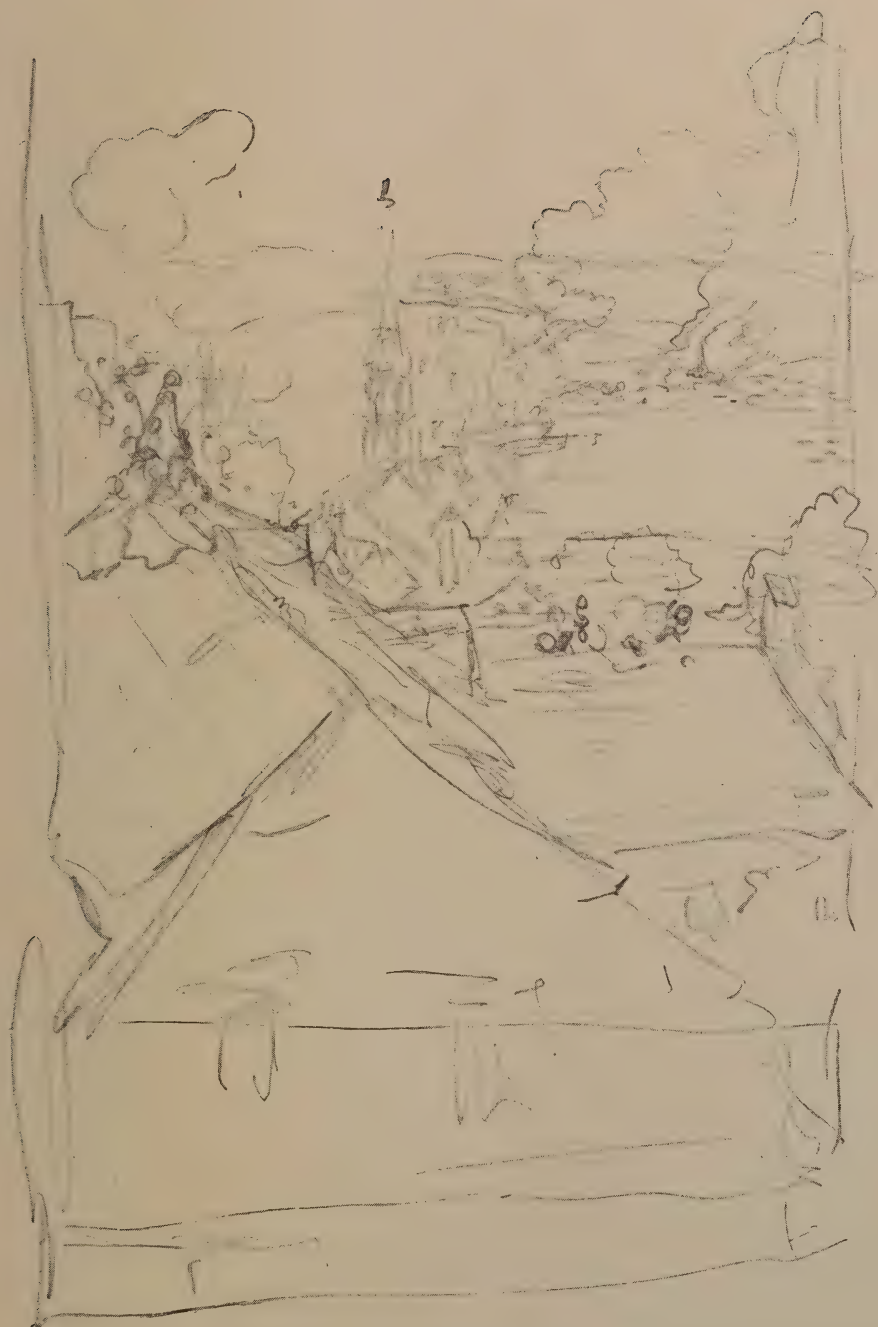
"I am thankful that my other poems fell into such good hands—I know the risk one runs in having a poem 'illustrated' by persons who will not take the trouble to enter into the author's idea and often utterly misrepresent him.

"Thanking you for all your good scenes and the very handsome book, I am, my dear sir,

"Very sincerely yours,

"OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES."

With these pictures of the Middle Ages, especially those for *Men of Iron*, which so admirably interpreted the spirit of the period, Howard Pyle gained a nation-wide reputation as a medievalist. So far-reaching was this fame, in fact, that he was desired on all sides to illustrate articles and tales which would give him an opportunity of using this talent. First it was Bret Harte's "Birds of Cirencester" in *Scribner's* for January, 1898, and some *Don Quixote* pictures in the *Century* in 1901. About 1900, or a little after, great improvements in the methods of color reproduction were made, and he began to turn his attention to paintings in full colors. For *Harper's* he began a series of illustrations for medieval stories, many of which came from the pen of James Branch Cabell. These pictures with their gorgeous harmonies of brilliant colors made a lasting impression both on the publishers and on the public. Their tendency was to minimize his earlier work—the pen-and-inks and the black-and-white oils—in favor of these new



First Sketch for
VIEWING THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL
Harper's Magazine, 1901

and lavish creations. Part of a letter dated October 9, 1903, from Mr. Thomas B. Wells, the present editor of *Harper's Magazine*, in which most of these pictures were published—the management of the Harper house had undergone radical changes in the two or three preceding years—best shows the appreciation with which they were greeted. He refers to some paintings for the story "The Stairway of Honor" by Maud Stepney Rawson:

"I have wondered so often at the beauty of your work and have always felt so great an enthusiasm for it, that it is difficult for me to say more of these particular pictures than I have said of others. Yet they do seem to me by far the most beautiful, the most sympathetic and the most lively illustrative pictures that you have done. They offer ample evidence in every way of the great care which you say you have put into their making. Such pictures give a true, artistic distinction to the magazine—and that is what we are all striving for.

"Mr. Duneka is quite as enthusiastic over the pictures as I am and has asked me to express to you his great appreciation of them. He was particularly pleased with your interpretation of the heroine, combining as it does real, womanly beauty with a thoroughly artistic treatment. . . ."

This enthusiasm on the part of Harpers, interpreting as it did the feeling of the reading public, was an expression of the great interest in romance which was so prevalent in the early years of the twentieth century, an interest which had been largely created by Maurice Hewlett, Stanley Weyman, and others, to which the vogue of Stevenson had added power, and which had in popularity almost obscured the valiant efforts for realism made by William Dean Howells

and Hamlin Garland. Howard Pyle himself distrusted this popular approval. While he was pleased with his first sets of romantically medieval pictures, he felt that to repeat them again and again would be very dangerous. There was too great a similarity in them; he was frankly afraid of destroying his artistic usefulness through allowing himself to become identified with this pseudo-romantic movement. He did not object to making pictures which gave him the opportunity to interpret faithfully and sincerely the Middle Ages as he conceived them, but he felt a decided aversion to illustrating stories of what he considered the "fake medieval type."

Mr. Wells, early in 1904, wrote him as follows: "Here is the article for Christmas—Mark Twain's 'tribute to Joan of Arc.' . . . It seems to me one of the most beautiful and finished of the serious things which he has written. It may interest you to know that in his letter accompanying the manuscript he speaks of you as the one man in this or any other country who can make pictures for it. You will notice that in the last paragraphs of the article he gives a pretty clear idea of *his* picture of Joan of Arc, quite different from Bastien-Lepage's heavy picture in the Metropolitan. . . . " Howard Pyle, of course, accepted this commission without hesitation; here was a chance to be strictly honest with his medieval designs. By June the pictures were completed; there were four of them. Mr. Wells wrote in acknowledging them: ". . . Both as paintings and as illustrations they seem to all of us here by far the most important and serious work that we have had from you. Your conception of Joan is so much more charming and spiritual than that of Lepage—so much more as I am

sure she was, and as Mr. Clemens has seen her. . . .” In reply to this note, thanking Mr. Wells for his words of praise, Howard Pyle concluded with the postscript, “Again let me urge you not to send me too much medieval work.” But the popularity of these pictures was too great for them to be discontinued; and it must be admitted that in spite of the artist’s objections many of them were imaginatively and technically excellent, for example the one illustrating Cabell’s story “In Necessity’s Mortar,” concerning which the author wrote him: “. . . I don’t know when I have seen anything I liked so well as the painting of Villon in the October *Harper*. The verve of him! the cleverness! and with it all the irremediable baseness! I only wish the text suggested it.”

These successes, however, did not reconcile him to a continued application to strictly medieval work. On April 23, 1907, he wrote to Mr. Wells: “. . . I am in great danger of grinding out conventional magazine illustrations for conventional magazine stories. I feel myself now to be at the height of my powers, and in the next ten or twelve years I should look to do the best work of my life. I do not think that it is right for me to spend so great a part of my time in manufacturing drawings for magazine stories which I cannot regard as having any really solid or permanent literary value. Mr. Cabell’s stories, for instance, are very clever, and far above the average of magazine literature, but they are neither exactly true to history nor exactly fanciful, and, whilst I have made the very best illustrations for them which I am capable of making, I feel that they are not true to medieval life, and that they lack a really

permanent value such as I should now endeavor to present to the world. . . . ”

This was a sincere plea for a change in the character of the work asked of him, and the request was granted. From that time, although occasionally he did make paintings for medieval stories, his real attention was turned to other phases of his work. The colored pictures of the romantic Middle Ages, however, were, with the exception of the pirate scenes, which will be discussed in the next chapter, the outstanding feature of his work in the period that followed the turn of the century. Yet he himself always felt that they were not particularly good examples of his ability. They were, in his opinion, inaccurate and stilted, and all were tainted with a pervading sameness. His view is not wholly justified by the pictures, but there is in it a certain kernel of truth.

During these years, however, he had the opportunity of making a set of pictures in which he could use his knowledge of the Middle Ages to the very best advantage. Mr. Henry H. Harper, representing the Bibliophile Society, of which Howard Pyle was a member, requested that he make a series of illustrations for Thomas Frognall Dibdin's *The Bibliomania or Book-Madness*, which the society was about to publish for its members in an extremely luxurious edition. These pictures, when completed, were such magnificent examples of his work that it was determined to issue a portfolio of them, each one etched by Mr. W. H. W. Bicknell, to be distributed only among the members of the society. When they appeared in 1903 they met with unprecedented success: they were not only illustrations, they were paintings of the first order, and were greeted as such

by the critics. In them there is again the similarity to Dürer, but the outstanding characteristic is Howard Pyle at his best, Howard Pyle painting something that he loves and putting himself thoroughly into it. He considered the "Friar Bacon" as the best of the pictures from the technical point of view, but admitted that the "Caxton" was the best subject. Their popularity among connoisseurs is well attested by the fact that they are being continually sought for throughout book and art stores today.

After the success of *Robin Hood*, it evidently occurred to Howard Pyle that something of the same nature might be done for King Arthur, and when, nearly twenty years after the publication of that first success, he continued to receive letters from devoted admirers begging him to write a book dealing with the Arthur legend, he finally wrote to Scribners on March 3, 1902:

"It has been suggested to me that I write a book somewhat matching the *Robin Hood* but giving the adventures of King Arthur and his Knights. The suggestion has been lying in my mind for some time and the more I think over it the more feasible the project seems to me to be. It should, I think, be written in the same direct and homely English of the *Robin Hood* but with a more mature and poetic finish. As the *Robin Hood* was my first work I should, probably, make this the last of its kind. . . . "

Scribners, in spite of the fact that they already had three Arthur books on their list, fell in with the idea at once, saying that they could "easily imagine that Howard Pyle might give a distinction both of form and of substance to the Arthur legend which would detach it decidedly from all other books dealing with the same subject." Accord-

ingly, the work was begun, and arrangements were made with *St. Nicholas* for it to appear first as a serial in that periodical.

It was necessarily somewhat slow work. There had to be a great deal of research and a great deal of thinking; Malory had to be studied intelligently and persistently; and the problems of characterization were not easily solved. Then also he found the amount of material so colossal that the original plan of three volumes at the most had to be changed for one that included a fourth. One of the difficulties that beset him is explained in a letter he wrote somewhat later to Edith Dean Weir:

" . . . I have had great trouble in treating the character of Sir Gawaine to fit it to the purposes which I have in view. I wish to represent in my book all that is noble and high and great, and to omit, if it is possible, all that is cruel and mean and treacherous. Unfortunately the stories of chivalry seem to be very full not only of meanness and of treachery, but of murder and many other and nameless wickednesses that discolor the very noblest of the characters—such, even, as the character of King Arthur himself. In the more generally accepted histories, the characters of Sir Gawaine and his brothers do not seem, unfortunately, to be worthy of the high tribute which you pay to the chief hero of the group. I must follow the thread of the better-known legends, for it is not advisable for me to draw upon the less well-known narratives. So I try to represent those which are known in the best possible light. Accordingly, I try to represent Gawaine as proud and passionate, quick to anger, but with a broad basis of generosity and nobility as an underlying stratum of his nature.

"I wish, for instance, that I could forget that part of the narrative that tells of the mean and treacherous way in which Gawaine and his brothers killed King Pellinore for no other reason than their jealousy for his splendid knight-hood, and murdered Sir Lamorack for the same reason, knowing that they themselves would receive no punishment because of their close kinship with King Arthur. Such acts as these I know were only characteristic of the dark and bloody Middle Ages, so I have tried to modernize Sir Gawaine, losing as little as possible of his general characteristics as I understand them from the most universally accepted narratives, and making him a brave and noble knight in the modern sense.

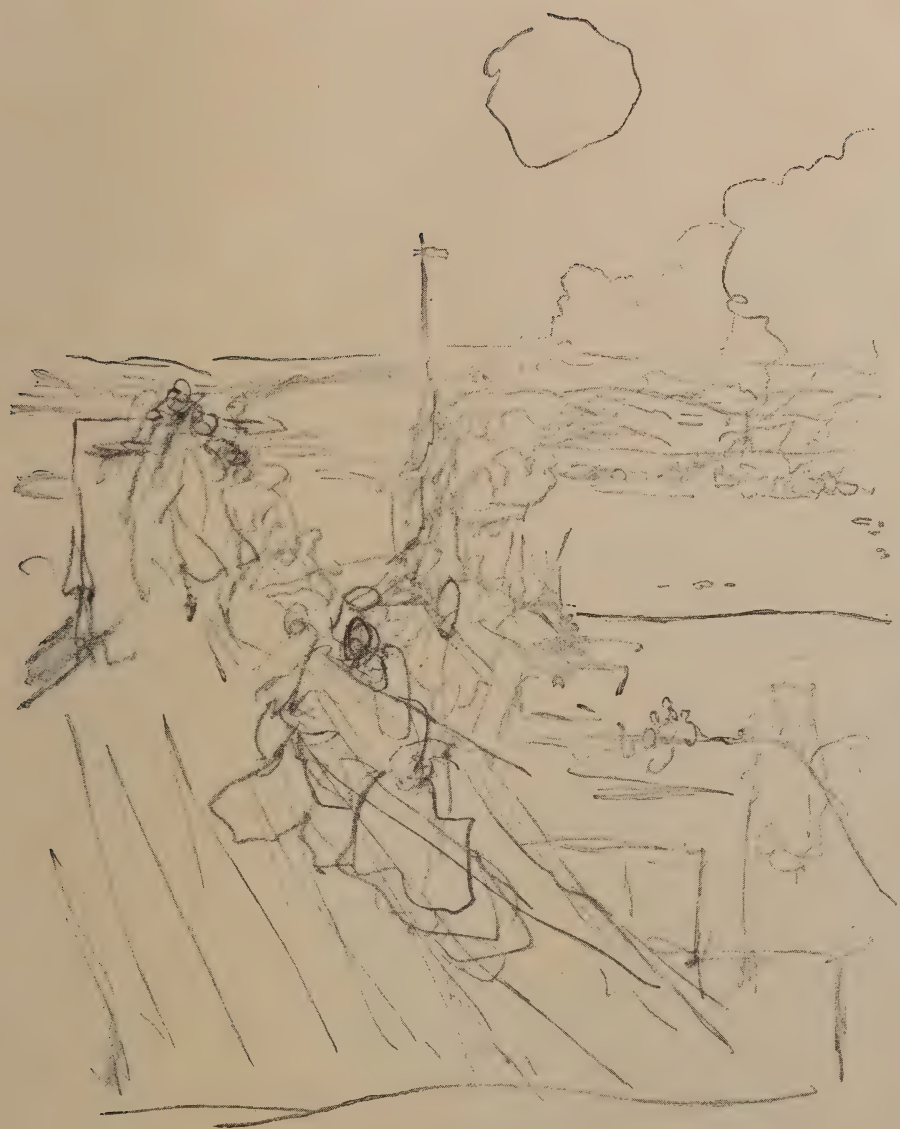
"I wish in these stories that I could write half a dozen books instead of the three volumes to which I must necessarily limit myself; for in three books one can only touch upon a comparatively few of the voluminous and multitudinous incidents of the Arthurian narrative. One can only take the direct thread, as it were, and string one's stories upon it. One can only narrate, and one must tell the direct narrative, treating it with as much original incident as possible."

But in spite of the difficulties of handling and in spite of the thousand and one other calls on his energy, the Arthur story grew. On February 12, 1903, he wrote to Scribners, "My book of King Arthur is pretty well along in the writing. Quite half of it has been written. . . ." By September 7th the text was completed and all of the pictures with the exception of a few tailpieces had been sent

to the publishers. The book itself made its appearance in time for the Christmas trade.

The remaining volumes of the series were not published in rapid succession, but for various reasons, largely the press of his work with Harpers and his new interest in mural decoration, were spread out over the next seven years. *The Story of the Champions of the Round Table* appeared in 1905, *The Story of Sir Launcelot and his Companions* in 1907, and *The Story of the Grail and the Passing of Arthur* in 1910. As a new form of the Arthurian legend these books have been signally popular. They give in a complete way a very straightforward and easy account of most of the adventures of the different knights. There are everywhere present in them the marks of good taste which were always characteristic of Howard Pyle. The pictures were all done in pen-and-ink and many of them, especially those in the first two volumes, are superb in their stateliness and grandeur. One needs only to see such pictures as "Two Knights do battle before Camilard" and "King Arthur findeth ye old woman in ye hut" to catch the delightful spirit of ancient romance that colors the whole Arthurian narrative; and the portrait pictures of the important characters are nearly always vigorous, strong, and full of meaning, as, for example, the one of Merlin. But as a whole, the books lack something of the compelling power of the earlier stories. They do not have the warmth and fire of *Robin Hood* and *Men of Iron*.

All these books, from the *Robin Hood* to the last of the Arthur stories, constitute a collection of medieval story which has been a growing delight to children for the past four decades, and which is a princely heritage for the



Second sketch for
VIEWING THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL
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children of the future. As an expression of Howard Pyle's own feeling in regard to these productions and the importance which they held in comparison with the other fields of his endeavor, a paragraph from a letter to Merle Johnson is eminently fitting:

"My ambition in days gone by was to write a really notable adult book, but now I am glad that I have made literary friends of the children rather than older folk. In one's mature years, one forgets the books that one reads, but the stories of childhood leave an indelible impression, and their author always has a niche in the temple of memory from which the image is never cast out to be thrown into the rubbish-heap of things that are outgrown and outlived."

CHAPTER VII

"THE BLOODY QUAKER"

"**D**O YOU recall the night when I was at your house in Wilmington and you showed me that fine collection of 'buccaneer' books which you had on your shelves? Since then in pictures and in your writings I have often been reminded of that golden vein—and now that I look out on the Caribbean from my window in this Hacienda I feel strongly the echoes of the old life which you have made so real to the imagination. . . ." These lines written to Howard Pyle from Porto Rico, in 1907, by S. W. Marvin, who had been for years a close friend through his connection with *Scribner's*, tell in a few words almost the whole story of the pirate pictures and tales. Howard Pyle's interest in buccaneers and marooners was a gradual growth; it had in it something akin to the fascination which historical research held for him, but it was animated by a more romantic feeling, by an emotional impetus, as it were. Pirates and their adventurous lives held a strange attraction for him; he was never more content than when he had found some half-forgotten account of a notorious buccaneer, and had plenty of time to spend in an examination of it.

For fifteen or sixteen years after his marriage a part of nearly every summer was spent in Rehoboth, the little seaside town a few miles south of Cape Henlopen which has been mentioned several times before. During the early

"THE BLOODY QUAKER"

years he could never give up more than a week or two from the round of picture-making in Wilmington, but later, when he had become a recognized power in American illustration and was thus more confident of his abilities, he would go



From
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to Rehoboth for the entire summer, taking with him John Weller, his model and general handyman, and there he would work, carrying on the tradition of his pictures without interruption. The Pyle family lived in a big green cottage which belonged to Mrs. Pyle's mother. The cottage

directly overlooked the ocean; there was an immense veranda where one could sit watching the ocean roll up the gently sloping, golden-sanded beach. These were joyous summers; the life was simple and refreshing, full of the most cherished companionships with his children. There is a pleasant little account of these days, written after Howard Pyle's death by a pseudonymous Miss Seventeen in the *New York Evening Post*, in 1911, which gives with admirable fidelity a picture of Rehoboth and the Pyles:

" . . . The scene is a bit of Delaware coast, level, glistening sand, rolling breakers, a narrow boardwalk, and as a background a row of unpretentious cottages. From one of these issues a man in a bathing suit, carrying on his shoulder a baby, who clutches his hair and crows delightedly. A dash across the beach, a plunge into the breakers, several dips in the curling foam, and then another dash back again to deliver a happy two-year-old to a waiting nurse maid.

"The man was Howard Pyle, the baby his youngest daughter Eleanor; the scene, the daily performance that delighted the bathers on the beach and those on Rehoboth porches.

"When this pleasant picture flashed into the light, it proved merely the forerunner of many others in which the artist was the chief figure. For of all the acquaintances made by a girl of these days in a happy summer holiday, it is Mr. Pyle who stands chief among them. She had come to Rehoboth more than well acquainted with his books. *Pepper and Salt*, *Men of Iron*, *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*—these all were ranged on the library shelves with many another cherished volume. To learn that the

artist-author of her admiration was to be a next-door neighbor supplied material a-plenty for hero-worshipping seventeen.

"Rehoboth in that day deserves a special story of its own, and makes an ideal stage upon which to figure picturesquely. It was one of the now almost extinct species of seashore resort where people of refinement and modest means might live a simple out-of-doors existence, untroubled by casinos, Sunday excursions, or shops. . . . A beach so perfect that lifelines and bathing-master were unknown, and beautiful, cool stretches of pine woods, made a combination unique in this imperfect world. . . .

"In a frame cottage, large enough to accommodate a numerous brood of sons and daughters, lived for many summers Howard Pyle, as much an integral part of the Rehoboth colony as his clergyman neighbor or the Baltimore manufacturer, whose big house was the nearest local approach to a 'palatial residence.' Here he worked in a small studio built in his back yard, or painted in the open, undisturbed by curious observers. . . .

"On the very first morning after her arrival the new-comer wakened to the mingled sounds of breakers dashing on the stretch of beach and the chatter of childish voices. A peep from the window disclosed a gay company, gathered about a flagstaff on the corner. Among them stood the tall man of her later enthusiasm. He was raising the Stars and Stripes, while half a dozen hands saluted its unfurling, and as many eager voices sang its praise. Every pleasant morning of that summer saw the same flag thrown to the winds by the Pyle family, and every evening repeated the ceremony of lowering it when an imaginary sunset gun had

boomed across the sands. Much in keeping with Howard Pyle's sturdy Americanism seems the little ceremony so carefully performed. . . .

"On a day in late July there appeared at the door of the clergyman's cottage one of the numerous pickaninnies that swarmed about the kitchen doors of Rehoboth cottages, playing amicably with the children of the establishment, while their mothers cooked marvelous dishes within or ironed white petticoats on the latticed porch. This impish messenger carried a note—nay, rather, a magic spell—that was to transform a commonplace Monday into a day forever marked with a white stone. And the spell read, tamely enough, 'Mr. and Mrs. Howard Pyle request the pleasure of Miss Hero-Worshipping Seventeen's company on Thursday evening, July 21st, at 8 o'clock.' The word 'Cards' appeared in the lower left-hand corner of the note. . . .

"Euchre was the game in vogue in those simple days. And every evening before the grand event was spent by the excited girl in practising with the aid of a sympathetic clergyman host, so that she might not mix up the right and left bower, or be puzzled as to the proper moment for trumping a partner's ace. Even more anxiously than she studied her game did she regard her face in the mirror, a plain little face, rendered none the more attractive by a sunburn that sturdily resisted all the blandishments of cold cream.

"Of what happened Thursday she has a confused memory rather than a clear picture. There were lots of 'young men and maidens, old men and children,' for such affairs at Rehoboth were by no means sophisticated in tone. She played cards automatically, conscious all the while of a big,



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From
A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE
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kindly man, who leaned over the table for an occasional genial word, who talked mostly to the quiet girls or the shy boys, who urged one to eat lots of peach ice cream and dispensed salad in truly Southern portions.

"When the scores of the players were announced, Miss Seventeen heard in dazed surprise her name called as winner of the first prize. If only it might be an original sketch by Mr. Pyle himself! That the Fates might have so ordained was her one thought as she rose at her host's request to receive her gift. Mr. Pyle never knew how agonizingly long were the seconds during which she faced the expectant assembly, while he made the humorous presentation speech that had popped into his head, and until an opened box revealed her present to be a hat pin.

"One more picture of Rehoboth days includes Mr. Pyle. There came a morning when Salomy's beaten biscuits were more marvelous wonders of cookery than usual. When this happened neighborly instinct prompted a sharing. A pleased youngster was dispatched with a heaped-up plate and a message for the Pyles. The plate proved her open sesame to that innermost sanctuary, the studio itself, where Mr. and Mrs. Pyle and the artist's secretary welcomed the gift as if beaten biscuit were the rarest thing in life instead of an everyday Rehoboth necessity.

"On the easel stood the picture that was later to make the frontispiece of a well-known magazine. Under a blossoming apple tree sat a young girl and her lover. Back of the tree, grimly suggestive of coming change, stood a tall figure in white draperies wielding a scimitar. No accompanying poem was needed to explain the illustration.

"Do you understand now the scene you surprised in the

back yard the other afternoon?' laughed Mr. Pyle. The bearer of beaten biscuit did. On that particular occasion she had discovered John, the Pyle handyman, model and gardener, and butler and nurse, swathed in sheets, flourishing a sickle. . . . "

This account shows the almost rustic simplicity with which the Pyles lived in Rehoboth. A gentle restfulness pervaded the whole atmosphere. Oddly enough, it was here, amid such happily domestic surroundings, that that vigorous love of pirates was born and was nourished until we have it amplified and adorned in such tales as "The Ruby of Kishmoor" and "The Ghost of Captain Brand." The topography of the coastline explains it. To the north of Rehoboth, just a few hundred yards south of Cape Henlopen, tower some immense sand dunes, on the top of which looms a quaintly picturesque lighthouse built in 1763, white-washed and glistening in the sun. Legends which are as old as the lighthouse itself have it that these dunes were once the haunt of many a bloodthirsty old sea-dog, who used them as a safe hiding place for unmentionable booty. The legends are current gossip of the locality, and the dunes themselves, with their smooth treacherous surface and their vague uncertain form, rather confirm the stories with their appearance. The persistently inquisitive visitor can see the all-powerful onward march of the sand; he can see it gradually spread from year to year; in one place are the gnarled and bony trunks of innumerable trees which were once a vast pine forest but which have met in silent struggle the devouring sand. It is assuredly a place curiously appropriate for pirates.

From the very beginning of Howard Pyle's weeks in Rehoboth, as soon as he had felt the spell of the sand dunes' secrecy, the fondness for pirates was strong in his heart. He began to collect books on the subject, and gradually that library, which Mr. Marvin alluded to in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, came to include almost every book which could shed any light upon the lives and deeds of Morgan, or Kidd, or Teach, or any of the notorious free-booters of a former age. These books he read with a relish; even the dry and somewhat pedantic accounts of trials and examinations were of unflagging interest so long as they contained a thread of information about a buccaneer. He was steeped in pirate lore, his own vivid imagination decorating the narratives from the books with romantic lights and shadows.

The first creation that rose out of this buccaneering interest was a novel, *The Rose of Paradise*, published first in *Harper's Weekly* as a serial during the summer months of 1887, and then as a book in the following year. Before this, in 1885, he had published a novel entitled *Within the Capes*, a book which the *Saturday Review* called a "rattling good yarn very well spun." But *Within the Capes*, although it was a tale of the sea, full of adventure and thrills, even though it included a treasure which the hero found on a deserted island, contains no characters who are pirates. The book is in a way, however, a preparation, an experimental background, as it were, for this new launching into the seas of piratical history. In *Within the Capes* Howard Pyle learned to handle the fundamentals of an exciting story, and trained his imagination towards marine subjects, all of which was of inestimable value to him when

he came to write about the grim old sea captains who figured in so many of his later stories.

The Rose of Paradise has a real pirate character, the redoubtable Edward England. As the first of Howard Pyle's buccaneers he deserves some attention: a ruffianly, profane, but somewhat ironical man, combining with a hard unflinching exterior, one mite of generosity and kindness which is so small as to be almost imperceptible. He is drawn by the author with a keenness of perception that makes him stand out clearly and strongly as a bad man redeemed by an almost unconscious emotional mercy. He attracts and repels simultaneously; one irresistibly admires his devil-may-care attitude, loathes his murderous impulses, and loves his rare moments of moral susceptibility. There are other well-drawn characters in the book—Captain John Mackra, naïf and courageous; Captain Edward Leach, superficially well-bred, but villainously deceitful. These men are drawn with consummate skill; they are real persons with no breath of bookishness about them. The women, however, are hardly worthy of such high praise; they are adequate but by no means convincing. The story itself is full of movement; there are bloody battles with the pirates, thrilling escapes and breathless suspense, while over it all hovers the glowing light of the gigantic ruby, the *Rose* itself. It is not great literature, but, to use the famous words of Sir Philip Sidney, it is "a tale which holdeth children from play and old men from the chimney corner." The illustrations were done in black-and-white, and were full of an atmosphere that added immeasurably to the thrill, but they were by no means the masterpieces of pirate picture that were to come later.

On the strength of this novel and the knowledge of the subject which they knew him to possess, *Harper's* asked for an illustrated article to be entitled "Buccaneers and Marooners of the Spanish Main." It appeared in the magazine in 1887, a short account of the ancient strongholds of pirates in the West Indies, and of the particularly staggering audacities of some of the more notorious. But it was the illustrations which were epoch-making. They were alive. They portrayed Morgan and Blackbeard and other celebrities with marvelous verve, and with unquestionable fidelity. Among others there was the picture of a dejected pirate sitting on the beach, his hat and gun flung disconsolately away, a cheerless bottle lying untouched in front of him, while behind him the surf beats monotonously on the shore. This picture, which is entitled "Marooned," is one of the best which Howard Pyle ever produced from the enthusiasm of his pirate-lore. The figure of the pirate is almost beyond words, and the listless drooping of the hands a genuine touch of genius.

Then after these pictures came an illustration for E. C. Stedman's poem "Morgan." But Mr. Stedman himself gives an account of it:

" . . . 'Tis plain that I had an eye for genius, when I declared some years ago that you should illustrate any ballad of mine, whenever I could have my choice, and you would honor me by doing so.

"Since then you have won laurels with both pen and brush, while I am limited to the former. Give me a painter, say I, then, who, like Opie, mixes his colors with brains! Yes, and with fire and imagination.

"I was charmed with your drawing for 'Aaron Burr's

Wooing,' and furious with the engraver who clipped the nose of your delightful Widow Prevost. But the superb drawings for the 'Star Bearer' are the most satisfactory obbligate that any poetry of mine has ever received—the best work of this kind, too, in any American magazine.

"Of course, with your own 'Corsair' spirit . . . you could not fail to do something fine for my 'Morgan,' but I found, this morning, even better than I expected. The drawing, or rather painting, is magnificent! Figures, faces, composition, all dramatically fine, and catching the spirit of the ballad at its most characteristic point. 'Tis a pity that this unique painting, which is the result of both talent and close labor, should have to be condensed into a page of *Harper*. Yet, it will be effective, even on that scale.

"Yes, it is one of your very best, and will bear off the honors next December.

"I suppose you own the painting, but *I ought to*. I wish I were able to pay your price for it, if you would permit it to go on my walls. When I see such a picture enriching my own verse, I feel more than ever the loss of my former means. Still, I will pinch a good deal in other directions, if you will name a price for it.

"Then, you really ought to make a painting four times this size, from this fine study, possibly with more colors than black-and-white, for a large effect and for exhibition and sale. I say this because the grouping and motion of the sketch are so very striking.

"But again my thanks for your interpretation of my little ballad and may I have the good fortune more than once again to be with you before the public."

This was written on July 20, 1888. Howard Pyle



Sketch for
TORY REFUGEES ON THEIR WAY TO CANADA
Harper's Magazine, 1901

immediately answered, but unfortunately his letter has not been located. Here, however, is Mr. Stedman's reply:

" . . . The alliances of authors and artists are traditionally sincere. However, as you have such an alliance in your own dual capacities, I feel doubly drawn to my latest illustrator. Now, while appreciating at its full worth your willingness to present me at some time with one of your sketches, I want to say that I always have refused to accept the slightest sketch, as a gift, from any artist friend. For none knows better than I the infinite pains and life that go to 'the making of a work,' and I have stood up all my life for ample remuneration to its maker, whether painter or penman. I am charmed that you are willing to sell me the 'Morgan' cartoon, and at a price which I dare pay, and to obtain which (the amount) I shall write and sell a hundred-dollar poem, between now and the date of its return to your possession. And if I had the means formerly at my command, I should tell you that you ought to have more for so successful and elaborate a picture. If then, you are willing to dispose of it to me, for the hundred dollars, please consider it sold. And when you deliver it, advise me as to the most appropriate frame for me to give it. Then come and see it on our parlor wall, at one of our Sunday evenings next winter. . . . " Thus the picture of "Morgan at Porto Bello" passed into the hands of Mr. Stedman.

Then came a trip to Jamaica; and this expedition into the West Indies, into another of the ancient seats of buccaneers, brought a new impetus to the interest in pirates. Early in 1890 appeared an article in *Harper's Monthly* called "Jamaica, New and Old." Throughout the whole of it, mingled with the description of modern Jamaica, was an

undercurrent of pirate allusion. It is interesting to note a new sense of style that shows itself for the first time in this essay, words used in an almost precious way which would have been called impressionism ten or twenty years later. Such expressions as "The throb of machinery pulsed into silence," "through the quivering intensity of the mid-day tropical sun," or "the gnawing salt of the sea-breeze" are strewn indiscriminately throughout the essay. Yet this was several years before the publication of Stephen Crane's first book, and at least ten before the impressionistic style became the goal of the younger fiction writers. It was apparently, however, only experimentation, for with the exception of one or two places in some of the later short stories, Howard Pyle uses a straightforward, simple style, skillfully adapted to whatever subject he may have in hand.

After "Jamaica" there followed a number of stories and pictures dealing with buccaneers. "Blueskin the Pirate,"¹ a tale of the Delaware coast, the action of which centered around the picturesque sand dunes, was published in 1890. Then came an article, "Among the Sand Hills,"² about the dunes themselves, one sentence of which is sufficiently expressive of their attraction to be quoted: "A breathless curtain of silence stretches between the glare of the sky above and the whispering whiteness below." In the meantime, the lure of pirates had led Howard Pyle into the mazes of the literature of roguery and called forth a number of accounts in *Harper's* of Claude Du Val, Jack Sheppard, the romantic figure immortalized in Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, Jonathan Wild and others. These spirited tales,

¹ *The Northwestern Miller*, December, 1890, vol. xxx, p. 10.

² *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, September, 1892, vol. lxxv, p. 586.

drawn largely from old chapbooks, were written with a quaint, indescribable relish, and were gayly set off by entertaining pictures.

In November, 1894, in illustration to an article by Thomas Janvier, appeared a most dramatic picture, "Pirates Used to Do That to Their Captains Now and Then." It came to the attention of Frederic Remington, in whom Howard Pyle had found a congenial fellow artist. Remington immediately took a decided fancy to this picture and wanted it. An exchange of work was suggested. "Too good—too good," writes Remington on January 15, 1895. "The pirate captain dead on the sand. If I get that I will worship you, it, and once more take stock in humanity. As for what you will get—anything I have. I have nothing which is good in oil—sold out and have done nothing but potboil of late. The best thing I have is a big wash drawing now being reproduced for the market in actual size (retail price \$10) a bucking horse, going like the sweep of an angel's wing. I shall probably not paint until spring, but whatever you see of mine which suits your fancy, is yours. How's that? . . . I am modeling in wax—great fun. Your pen-and-inks (Doyle—*Scribner's*) are awfully smooth. Should like to run over and see you—can't go now, but six weeks from now, will bother you for a day if you say the word."

The picture was soon sent to Remington, on the receipt of which he wrote: "I have the defunct pirate and it goes right up in my collection. It is simply all-fired satisfying, and all I am going to do is to say 'much obliged' and 'it's one on me.' The 'puncher' will gallop into Wilmington some day—a 'puncher for your pirate'; that's fair trade if

I paint it well enough. I have so long wanted to own one of your pictures. I have a picture which Mr. Joseph Jefferson gave me—one of his own; he paints; a Joseph Jefferson ain't a bad thing in the bric-à-brac line."

Needless to say, when the "puncher did gallop into Wilmington," he immediately took up his position on the wall of the Pyle house in a very important place. This friendship between Howard Pyle and Frederic Remington, while never very intimate, leads one to see the similarity in their ideas. Both of them were working for the same thing—an untrammelled American art—which with American methods could interpret American subjects. Their work was entirely different, since one turned to the West exclusively for his material, and the other portrayed largely the former history of his country. Yet they recognized the fact that they were both striving for the same ideal, and sincerely honored each other in the recognition.

The absorption in pirates was so strong that when Howard Pyle came to write a boy's novel of life in Colonial Virginia, a buccaneer, Captain Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard, figured as one of the most important characters. This book, *Jack Ballister's Fortunes*, was a faithful study of Colonial customs and conditions. Jack Ballister, the hero, is kidnapped and sold into the service of a Virginia planter whose daughter is captured by the famous pirate captain and finally rescued by the hero himself. The plot is well knit, the action moves smoothly and rapidly. There is never a dull moment. It is huge in its possibilities for boys, who cannot fail to revel in the mass of adventure so thrillingly chronicled. When it was first published serially in *St. Nicholas* with pictures in black-and-white, Mr. W. F.

Clarke, one of the editors, called it "a noble story and an admirable picture of the time with which it deals." In 1895 it was published in book form.

The next important venture into the pirate field was "The Ghost of Captain Brand" which appeared in the Christmas number of *Harper's Weekly*, 1896. This story marks a change in the treatment of the picturesque old buccaneers. Heretofore they had always been realistic and truthfully historical; now a shade of fantasy is consciously introduced. On July 13, 1896, he wrote to *Harper's*, "I have in mind a somewhat chaotic outline of a story which shall be called perhaps 'The Ghost of Captain Brand.' As it grows in my mind I find it of rather a sensational order, the Captain Brand being an ex-pirate of the old school. The story would be the very furthest removed from realism, but I think might be made interesting if carried out as I have it in mind. . . . " Further, on August 12, " . . . I . . . find it a very difficult story to write, requiring very delicate and careful touching to give it the appearance of substance and reality. If it has no such appearance it will, I apprehend, be merely sensational without any real substance remaining. It is the elaboration of such details as this that runs it beyond its prescribed length, but I do not see how these can be left out without making the story bald and uninteresting. . . . " Then again, on August 31, " . . . I am well aware that the extreme length of the story validates a great deal against it, but, nevertheless, I send it to you to read, for I think there is a certain smack of originality about it, and the idea of the loves of the young couple aboard the pirate brigantine I think is not altogether amiss. It is, perhaps, a little overstrung in places, and ordinarily

I would keep it by me for a little while so that I might come to it with a fresh mind. . . . ” From these glimpses into his workshop it is clear that the story of Captain Brand was the object of many attentions. When it appeared, it met with tremendous success. The issue of *Harper's Weekly* in which it appeared was sold out in record time, and the edition was very large.

From that time this rather sensational treatment of pirates was more popular with Howard Pyle than was his former method. There was a sensational element in nearly every picture and story. *Collier's Weekly*, in December, 1899, published a picture, “Dead Men Tell No Tales,” about which he wrote to an inquiring correspondent:¹ “My pirate picture may be explained as follows:

“The captain of the pirate vessel and the first mate called upon three of the crew and together they have carried a chest of treasure up among the sand hills on the Atlantic Coast just below the mouth of Delaware Bay. They needed to revictual and water the ship, and were afraid to carry the chest of treasure aboard lest one of the King's cruisers, upon the lookout for pirates, should search them and find their ill-gotten gain.

“The pirate captain and the mate had already arranged between them that the fewer who knew such a secret the better. Consequently when the treasure was safely buried and a cross thrust down into the sand to mark the hiding place (for before their return a storm might so level the sand as to make it impossible to discover the exact spot where the treasure was hidden) they immediately proceeded to put out of the way the unfortunate witnesses of the secret.

¹ Letter to Mrs. Merton MacDonald, January 22, 1900.



THE FISHING OF THOR AND HYMIR
From
NORTH FOLK LEGENDS OF THE SEA
Harper's Magazine, 1902

"The mate shot two of the men as they stood together resting from their toil—the one with one pistol and the other with the other. The third victim started to run, but the captain running almost parallel with him and cutting him off at the edge of a little bluff, knocked him over with a single clean and well-directed shot.

"As the situation now stands the mate has no load in either of his pistols and the captain has one pistol which is yet loaded.

"I do not know what happened after I drew my picture."

This picture, while it had something of the old realism in it, was even more strenuously characterized by pure melodrama.

But the crowning triumph of the sensational, fantastical pirate vein, came with the story of the "Ruby of Kishmoor," which, although written many years before, was not published until 1907, when it appeared first in *Harper's Monthly* and then as a book. Like the "Ghost of Captain Brand," it was originally too long for the magazine, and had to be somewhat cut, in spite of the author's disapproval. He was afraid that the delightful spirit of extravagant melodrama would be spoiled in the cutting; as he said in a letter to Mr. Wells of *Harper's*: ". . . I wrote it many years ago and laid it aside so that when I approached it again, I think I came to it with a calm and critical spirit. My own impression of the story was that it was not lacking in literary value, and that the drolling was rather good for those who could catch the point of the joke; and I also felt at the same time that the story had enough interest to carry itself for those who read it only for the narrative. I have an idea that if it is too much condensed the joke will be

lost to those whom it may amuse, and that only the rather sensational narrative will be left—and of course you want to please all tastes. . . . ” As a compromise, the story was published slightly condensed in the magazine, and as the author had written it in the book. The results in each case prove his contention, for, as the tale appears in the book it is infinitely better than it was in the magazine. It is both lively and droll, deliciously hyperbolic and at the same time straightforwardly simple. Mr. Jonathan Rudd, a calm, sober, young Philadelphia Quaker, on a trip to Jamaica falls at once into an adventure so extravagant that it is beyond even his dreams. His dogged plainness and lack of romantic fervor provide exquisite fun under the circumstances. The pictures for *The Ruby of Kishmoor*, however, are its really outstanding merit. They are in color—bold but well-balanced color. The single figure of Captain Keitt, standing on the slanting deck of his ship with a high sea running behind and a burning galleon in the distance, is perhaps the best of all of Howard Pyle’s pirate pictures.

There had been, before these illustrations for *The Ruby of Kishmoor*, a number of buccaneering pictures in color; they came almost simultaneously with the colored Middle Age pictures, when the process of reproduction had been improved so as to make them adaptable. In the Christmas number of *Harper’s Monthly*, 1905, there had been four in illustration to one of the artist’s own articles, “The Fate of a Treasure Town.” These four pictures were the sensation of the magazine world; they were marvelously rich in color, but not garish; they were dramatically stirring, and vividly romantic. The one called “Attack on a Galleon,” with its

marvelous golds and greens, is a splendid achievement in design.

After *The Ruby of Kishmoor* there were a few other articles and stories about freebooters, but none of them is of any great importance. One might almost say that the pirate vein reached its culmination in the gorgeously colored pictures of *The Fate of a Treasure Town* and *The Ruby of Kishmoor*, and that after these triumphs Howard Pyle turned his versatile genius toward other phases of life or romance. Through the spell which pirates and their deeds held over him he had produced very worthy fruit. He had re-created the buccaneer, made him live in modern story; in the light of which fact it is interesting to find just what it was about pirates that appealed to him. Under a picture entitled “Ye Pirate Bold” he has written: “It is not because of his life of adventure and daring that I admire this one of my favorite heroes; nor is it because of blowing winds nor blue ocean nor palmy islands which he knew so well; nor is it because of gold he spent nor treasure he hid. He was a man who knew his own mind and what he wanted.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE SPIRIT OF AMERICA

*T*HROUGHOUT his whole career there was always one subject in which Howard Pyle was pre-eminently interested, and that was the history of the United States. Other matters could come and go; he could be feverishly occupied with the Middle Ages, he could be devoted for a time to the misdeeds of barbarous pirates, but always, even from his very first days in New York, he was fascinated by history, and felt that he was doing his best work when he was interpreting the life of some early Colony or outlining the attack on some British stronghold in the days of the Revolution. The mass of historical information which he had accumulated with incessant reading was truly remarkable. It embraced all the periods and all the phases of American history, including not only the more distinctively pictorial side of the subject such as battles and public occasions, but also the political and the economic. His reputation for this widespread knowledge of history was so well known to other artists that he was frequently called upon to supply some fellow craftsman with the details for a picture. He was proud of this ability to help other artists; he never failed to give the necessary information, and to it he always added a word of encouragement. But the chief merit of his historical research was that it found its expression in a series of pictures which interpreted

American history and life. The series finally included so many pictures, in fact, that it could almost serve as a pictorial history of the nation, for practically no period was omitted with the exception of the very modern.

So much absorption in an American past gave him a profound appreciation of everything connected with it. He could not see an old house destroyed without undergoing severe mental tortures, and the mere repairing of famous old buildings would move him to their support. The dismay which he expresses in the following letter to Mr. W. H. Mersereau, who was engaged in making repairs on the Old Swede's Church in Wilmington, is typical of the attitude which he had toward all such improvements:

" . . . Old buildings and fragments of the past are to me very and vitally alive with the things of the past. When, for instance, I saw your carpenters working upon the Old Swede's Church I could not but picture to myself in fancy the old builders of that past day in knee breeches and their leather aprons and their queer uncouth tools building up that which the present generation was tearing down.

"I understand exactly the unfortunate necessity of such repairs, but it also grieves me sadly to see them.

"Old Swede's Church has so long been a joy and a pride to me. In passing by on the train with any of my friends from other places I have always pointed it out with such pleasure, and I never failed to receive from them expressions of intense interest. To pass by now and see the garish yellow shingles and the crass new woodwork that stands in its place causes me a feeling of real distress that cannot be

assuaged by the knowledge that even such changes were absolutely necessary. . . .

"I do not believe that you will feel this to be mere sentimentality upon my part. I have lived so long in our American past that it is like a certain part of my life. My imagination dwells in it and at times when I sit in my studio at work I forget the present and see the characters and things of these old days moving about me. . . ."

The first really historical picture of Howard Pyle's to be published was in illustration to an article entitled "The Battle of Monmouth Courthouse,"¹ by Benson J. Lossing. The picture itself is called "Carnival, Philadelphia, 1778," and gives only slight promise of what was to follow after years of experience. It is stiff and cumbersome; there are too many figures and the composition is not such as to group them harmoniously. In fact, the illustration leads one to suspect that a young and untried artist had attempted something which lay far outside his province, a suspicion which is indeed justified. Still, there was one quality which the trained observer could not overlook; a careful attention to detail characterized every figure. This alone gave the prophetic note of future success. Let the painstaking care be allied with a breadth of vision and skillful composition, and a really accurate presentation of American history would result.

The next pictures which were interpretative of the Colonial background were much more simple and, consequently, far more effective. They were for the most part of the landscape variety, portraying bits of the countryside

¹ *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, June, 1878, vol. lvii, p. 29.

along the old national pike as they were long ago.¹ From the time of the production of these simple pen-and-inks, the advance in the drawing of historical subjects was uninterrupted. Article after article, some written by Howard Pyle himself, some by other hands, but each treating some phase of American history, appeared in the Harper publications, with careful and striking illustrations which seemed almost to be the *raison d'être* of the articles. The result of these successes was that Howard Pyle began to gain a nationwide reputation for his ability to interpret periods of American history.

In one way this phase of his genius differs very radically from those other phases which have been treated in the preceding chapters. It was through a combination of his abilities both as an artist and as an author that he was able to make so admirable a success with his fairy stories. Likewise, it was this creative duality that gave life and color to the Middle Ages, and particularly to his contributions to pirate lore. But in the field of history it was almost solely through pictures that he appealed to his audience. The articles which he wrote to go with his pictures, with the exception of the very first ones, are obviously work of the pot-boil variety. He made many attempts to adapt his historical knowledge to the written page, but nearly all are unsuccessful. Yet each was illustrated by excellent drawings. Finally, he almost entirely gave up writing on historical subjects and devoted himself wholly to their pictorial side. His inability to write compellingly on history is an inexplicable fact, and is all the more puzzling because of

¹ "The Old National Pike," by W. H. Rideing, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, November, 1879, vol. lix, p. 801.

his unflagging interest in the subject-matter and his unquestioned ability to portray it in pictures. Certainly, few of his productions are more widely known and appreciated than his paintings of Colonial and Revolutionary scenes.

Perhaps the best of the pen-and-inks which picture the early period of America are those which were done to illustrate Dr. Holmes's "One Hoss Shay" and "Dorothy Q." Mr. Winthrop Scudder, who was at that time art editor for Houghton, Mifflin & Company, was instrumental in getting Howard Pyle to undertake them. The "One Hoss Shay," which was published in 1892, contained a series of pictures which gave just the proper humorous setting for that popular poem. They harmonized perfectly with the spirit which Dr. Holmes had given the verses. This was followed, in 1893, by "Dorothy Q.," which met with equal approval. Then the publishers decided that they would put out a *de luxe* edition of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*. Howard Pyle was almost too busy to undertake the illustrations for this, but finally, after a great deal of persuasion on the part of Mr. Scudder, he consented. Mr. Scudder wrote him on January 24, 1893: ". . . You are probably aware that in our plans for the coming year the *Autocrat* has taken the first place. In other words, this is our leading book. If it is not illustrated by you I fear it will have to take a much less prominent place in the line. You are in such perfect sympathy with Dr. Holmes, not only on his literary side, but on the humorous as well, that I have felt from the beginning that your work on this book would give you a great deal of pleasure, delight the good old doctor, and satisfy the general public, who are so well acquainted with the *Autocrat*. . . ." It was probably this plea that



WHEN ALL THE WORLD WAS YOUNG
Harper's Magazine, 1909

influenced Howard Pyle to set about the making of the pictures. When they were completed and published in 1894 they came just too late to "delight the good old doctor," but they were so genial in their manner, so distinctly adapted to his work, that had the author been alive he would undoubtedly have been the first to hail them as admirable.

Just eighteen years after the publication of that first historical painting, "Carnival, Philadelphia, 1778," he had in *Harper's Monthly* a series of paintings in illustration to Woodrow Wilson's "George Washington." In the meantime there had been a host of pictures dealing with history in some form or other; single pictures such as "The First Visit of William Penn to America,"¹ and "Washington Taking Leave of His Officers";² illustrations for a historical novel, *In the Valley*,³ by Harold Frederic; decorations for S. Weir Mitchell's *Quaker Lady*;⁴ and numerous pen-and-inks illustrating stories and articles of various kinds. Each of these had added greatly to his reputation for the drawing of historical pictures and had brought about a great demand for his work in this field. Consequently when the Harpers secured the biography of George Washington which they intended to feature in the magazine, there was no illustrator who could command attention with such certainty as could Howard Pyle.

Alden, the editor of *Harper's Monthly*, wrote to him on August 20, 1895: "Professor Woodrow Wilson is preparing for our magazine six papers on George Washington. His first paper, treating the Virginia of Washington's

¹ *Harper's Weekly*, March 31, 1883, vol. xxvii, p. 199.

² *Ibid.*, December 1, 1883, vol. xxvii, p. 767.

³ *Scribner's Magazine*, beginning September, 1889, vol. vi, p. 284.

⁴ *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, November, 1890, vol. lxxxi, p. 933.

time (in early manhood), is nearly ready. It is to appear in our next January number. The author thinks these papers will furnish subjects for some very effective illustrations, and has suggested his preference for your treatment of such subjects. We also would be pleased if you could and would undertake the matter—can you? . . . You would need to go to Princeton at once to get from Professor Wilson your *motifs* for the first paper. . . . ”

The matter was accordingly arranged; Howard Pyle met Professor Wilson at Princeton and plans were made to make the most notable series of historical illustrations which had yet made their appearance in an American magazine. They were immensely successful pictures; in them was concentrated all the knowledge of the period which the artist had gained from unremitting research, and all the technical skill which had come with eighteen years' experience. Woodrow Wilson wrote to him on December 23, 1895, after having just seen the proofs of the first group, "I must write at once to express my admiration for the illustrations you have made for my first article. They seem to me in every way admirable. They heighten the significance of the text, not only being entirely in its spirit, but are themselves besides, perfect in their kind. The last of the three¹ seems to me especially delightful for its human truth. I have just written to beg the publishers to let me have proof copies of them, and of the rest as they follow: for I shall certainly want to frame some; all, indeed, that I can find room for." Then, a week later, he concluded a letter, " . . . I have already expressed my delight with the illustrations of the

¹ "They Read Only upon Occasions When the Weather Darkened," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, January, 1896, vol. xcii, p. 169.

first article; but I cannot help adding Mrs. Wilson's comment on the third one, that it reminds one, in its subtle touches of character, of *Gérôme*."

Howard Pyle was so absorbingly interested in the production of these pictures, and was so determined to have every detail correct, that he did not hesitate to question some of Professor Wilson's facts. His own knowledge of the subject was so immense that he could do this with authority. Professor Wilson wrote him, "I can say with all sincerity that the more you test my details the more I shall like it. I am not in the least sensitive on that point."¹ Owing to this co-operation on the part of the artist a number of changes were made in the text. Professor Wilson was impressed, and praised him in saying "you understand the objects I have in view quite as sympathetically as I do myself."² The last of the Washington articles was published in November, 1896, but their success had been so colossal that many magazines were begging Howard Pyle to do similar series for them.

The Washington pictures were exhibited first at the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia, where Howard Pyle was teaching at the time, and then at the St. Botolph Club in Boston. For each of these exhibitions he himself published a catalog, printed with old black-letter type, imitating in form and content the publications of the Revolutionary days. In the preface he claims for his muse that "she is extremely American in her Inclinations, and for this Reason he amuses himself with the Hope that the Publick may find some Entertainment in those simple and rural Scenes with which he has endeavoured to surround the characters he has depicted

¹ Letter to Howard Pyle from Woodrow Wilson, January 12, 1896.

² Letter to Howard Pyle from Woodrow Wilson, February 12, 1896.

and of which his Patrons may, without doubt, have as perfect an Acquaintance as he himself may boast of possessing." Then there follow descriptions of the various pictures, each one written in quaint old English. For example, the paragraph for the picture "They Read Only upon Occasions When the Weather Darkened," which Professor Wilson had particularly liked, was as follows: "It is the intention of the Artist in this Picture to represent the Life of a comfortable and well-circumstanced Planter of Virginia of the Period of 1740. From the particular Nicety with which he is dressed, you are to suppose him waiting for some Friends to come and join him at a Game of Cards. Meanwhile he is entertaining himself with reading some sly and merry Tale while he awaits their Arrival." These pictures, after their exhibition in Boston, were bought by a group of prominent men for the Public Library, where they now hang in the Children's Room.

In the meantime he was being importuned by the *Century Magazine* to illustrate *Hugh Wynne*, the new novel by S. Weir Mitchell, which was to run there as a serial. Since this novel treated the same period which Howard Pyle had handled so successfully in the "George Washington," the publishers were very desirous of having him do the pictures. The artist himself, however, who had had some experience in illustrating the productions of Dr. Mitchell, was not very eager to undertake this. Dr. Mitchell was a man hard to satisfy and extremely determined to have things just as he wanted them, regardless of what anyone else thought. Howard Pyle was too sincere an artist to allow his ideas to be changed and confused by another man. Therefore, it was with considerable trepidation that he un-

dertook this work. When he did start on the pictures he met with a great number of difficulties. It is not at all



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improbable that this was the most trying work that he ever did. He was very much disappointed with the first two pictures, which turned out rather badly. In taking stock

of his abilities after this failure he wrote on September 18, 1896, to Richard Watson Gilder of the *Century*:

" . . . I think the trouble with my pictures arises in part because the first part of this story is descriptive rather than actional, and in part because I feel myself working with very much restraint. I am so especially anxious to do this work to your satisfaction and to that of Dr. Mitchell that I am constantly haunted by the fear that what I am doing I am doing amiss. And then, to confess the truth, I do not feel myself entirely fitted to illustrate stories.

"I think the chief value—such as it is—of my work lies in the imaginative side, but where the text places the scene exactly as it occurred the artist is obliged to limit himself exactly to that text, and you can easily see that it is almost impossible to exercise the imagination freely.

"In the illustration of the first part, for example, I suggested a point that I felt rather filled out the story than directly illustrated it. The sketch I sent you represented the little boy leaning over the parapet of the bridge with the surroundings, as I could imagine them, of quaint old Philadelphia. I think the subject was far more interesting and fulfilled the text much more than the picture of the mother welcoming the return of the little boy from school. But, as you may remember, it was deemed best by you that I should adhere strictly to the text. . . . "

Then on September 23rd, he wrote to Dr. Mitchell, who was beginning to complain that he was not kept in touch with the progress of the pictures:

" . . . I wish most heartily now that I had not undertaken to illustrate it. I quite agree with you that a story, especially one that is so dramatically told, is very much



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better without illustrations than with them—that is unless these illustrations be made to fill out the text rather than to make a picture of some scene described in it.

“I do not feel that my ability in picture-making lies in illustrating stories. In such work I am hampered and confined by the text, and my talent (such as it is) can have no room in which to play. It has always seemed to me to be better to choose for an illustration some point, if possible, not mentioned directly in the text but very descriptive of the text.

“For example, in the first instance I was compelled to choose the return of the little boy from school welcomed by his mother. This, while perfectly charming in your description of it, was not a subject one could very well depict. You gave the idea of cool, dark interiors and wide spaces. In making the drawing I had to limit myself to the open door and a small vista outside; for in making a drawing one must make it with what one sees with the eyes and not with what one sees with the mind and thought, as you make in the text. If the story which I was illustrating had been mine, I would rather have chosen some impersonal subject to be called, perhaps, ‘Mother and Son,’ in which the mother, with her arm around the little boy, is walking down the dark room with such surroundings as you depict in the text.

“There is no such scene mentioned in your story, but I think it would illustrate the feeling you intend to convey, and if correctly drawn, would carry forward the thought of the reader with some definiteness of purpose. . . .”

The soundness of this view of illustration immediately won Dr. Mitchell to the side of the artist. From that

time, in spite of certain objections from the publishers, the pictures were drawn in the manner that best suited Howard Pyle; and the remainder of them, that is all except the first two, were excellent examples of his work. Dr. Mitchell was very much pleased with them; he looked upon his illustrator as a genius in the craft, one whose opinions were not to be overborne even by the author.

This episode was the beginning of a pleasant friendship between the two men. They had a great deal in common; they were both passionately fond of early American history, and their tastes in literature were very similar. The following letter which Dr. Mitchell wrote to Howard Pyle, thanking him for a book in which a sketch had been drawn, shows very clearly the spirit of the intimacy which obtained between them:

“January 29, 1905.

“My Dear Pyle:

“I have been busy with consultations in and out of town, or else I surely would have acknowledged the visit of those two ladies, Miss Evelina and the modest and amiable Miss Burney. The authoress must have sat to you. Was it in a dream? It amazingly realizes her, for me.

“I once dreamed of an author—only once. It was while in Rome. I stood beside Keats’s grave at night; I knew that he was standing beside me. He said, ‘I am you and you are I.’ I said, ‘Impossible.’ ‘Oh,’ he replied, ‘All things are possible in sleep,’ and then I was alone. I recall for you this queer experience, and thank you for the delightful remembrance, sure again that the proper Miss Burney must have appeared at your bedside—Fie Fanny!

"The book goes on my shelf beside a book George Meredith gave me. Again I am

"Your grateful friend,

S. WEIR MITCHELL."

The next important historical paintings were done for *Scribner's Magazine* and were in illustration to Henry Cabot Lodge's "Story of the Revolution." These were painted with great elaboration and care and in full color, since there was some thought of hanging them eventually in the Congressional Library at Washington. The colors, however, were not reproduced in the magazine publication. Due to some government formality, some regulation as to the ownership of all pictures hung in government buildings, it was found impossible to place them in the library. But this information fortunately came too late to interfere with the care which Howard Pyle took in making the pictures. Besides, having once begun them with the idea of painting an elaborate series, he would in all probability have completed them as such, regardless of their ultimate destination. Extracts from some of his letters to Mr. Chapin, the art editor of *Scribner's Magazine*, will give an idea of the amount of careful planning each of these pictures required, and also of the uncertainty which Howard Pyle himself felt about them in the beginning:

"September 21, 1897.

"I think that the drawing represents Lexington and the fight as correctly as we of the nineteenth century can gather our facts. . . . I hope you may like the drawing, for it represents a good deal of research and careful study. The

engagement, as my picture represents, occurred just before sunrise of an excessively warm April day. . . . ”

“September 23, 1897.

“I am very glad that you like my picture of the Lexington fight. I may confess to you that I somehow felt as timorous about it as a young artist presenting his first work. I felt the subject so very much, and the cloudy mud upon my palette was so inadequate to express the lucidity of the early morning light and the dimness of the earth that I feared you might find it as unsatisfactory as I did. . . . ”

“November 18, 1897.

“I send you today the Bunker Hill picture. It is quite carefully studied, and I think, excepting the portraiture which of course has to be idealized, it is a correct view of the battle. . . .

“The ship of war firing from the distance is the *Lively*. In the remoter distance I have represented Copp’s Hill with the boat yard at the foot of the hill as nearly as I could represent it from the maps of the period. The smoke arising from the remoter distance is being discharged from a fortification upon Copp’s Hill. Charlestown lies back of the hill and the black smoke arising is from the burning houses.”

“August 2, 1898.

“After many delays and a great deal of worry on my part, I am sending you today my picture of Benedict Arnold. I trust you may find it to your mind, for I have expended much thought and great care upon it. I think it has some dramatic intent.

“It represents the scene where Arnold, having received

the letter acquainting him with the capture of André, tells his wife of his discovered treason and of the necessity of his immediate escape. She sinks fainting at his feet and he stands over her contemplating the ruin of his own life. In this moment of despair and ruin the supreme egotism of the man was very apparent. The account says he stopped only a moment to raise his unconscious wife and to lay her upon the bed, then without calling for assistance or giving any further aid to her he went down stairs, bade adieu to his guests at the breakfast table, mounted a horse belonging to one of his guests and rode away to where his boat was waiting to carry him to the English sloop-of-war, *Vulture*.

"I have tried to represent in his face his own supreme self-concentration. . . ."

A great deal of thought was expended on the selection of the subjects for these pictures. The following letter to Senator Lodge gives a glimpse of the way in which the artist chose the particular point in an article to be illustrated, and incidentally sheds light upon his method of illustration:

"December 28, 1897.

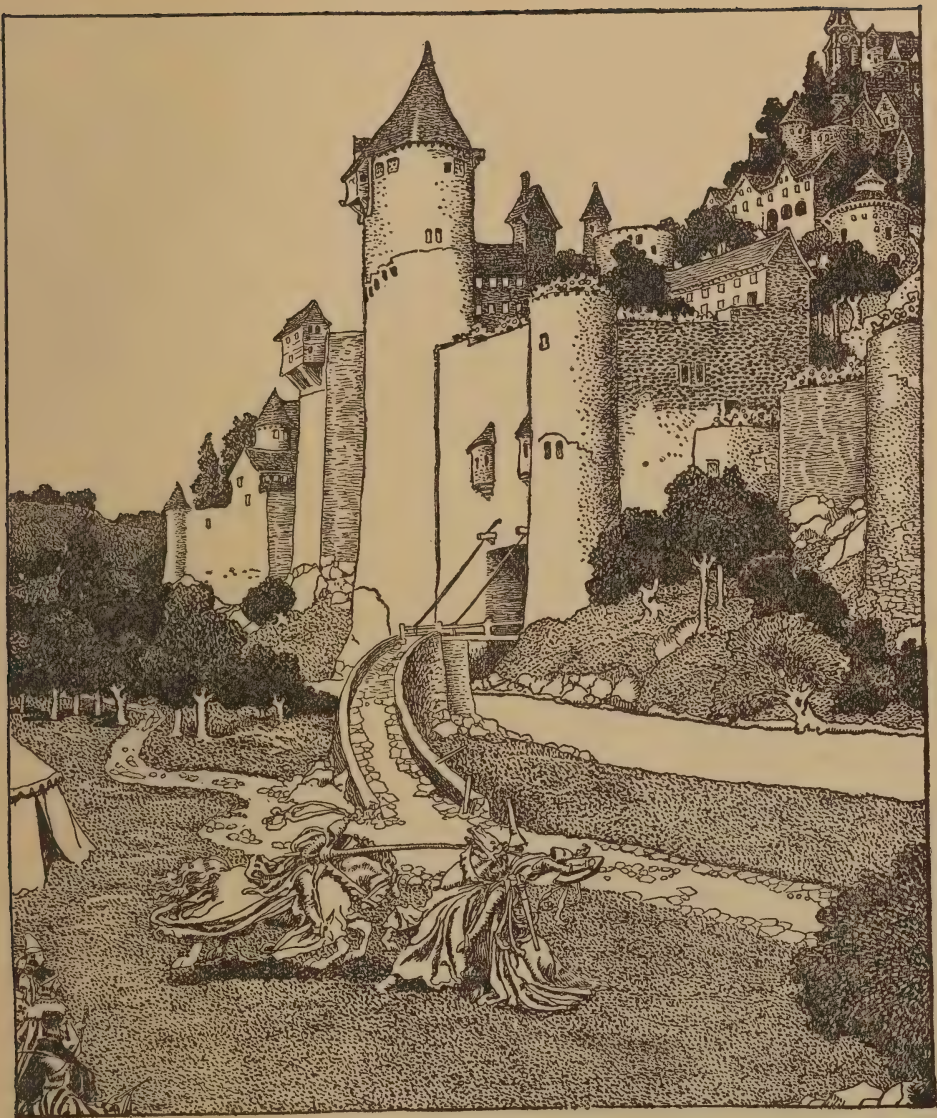
"I have read over very carefully your seventh historical paper, the first part of which treats of the conquest of the West under Clark and the second part of the opening of the campaign in the South.

"I have given the matter a great deal of careful consideration, but prefer not writing definitely to *Scribner's* before consulting you. It seems to me that the proper part to illustrate in the article would lie in the first part—the conquest of the West, and my predilection is decidedly for the ballroom scene in which Clark presents himself to the

eyes of the dancers and where the Indian raises the war-whoop—the sudden advent of Anglo-Saxon civilization into that remote and half-savage wilderness.

“On second consideration, however, it seems to me that the ballroom scene would be a very dangerous thing for me to undertake. You have described it so entirely and with such few and well-chosen words that I fear my picture would be in the nature of an anti-climax. The illustrator’s art is not capable of so much movement and vivacity as the *littérateur’s* art. Pictorial art must represent some salient point that shall convey as in a whole view a certain given situation. It shall not require any text to explain it, but should explain itself and all the circumstances belonging to it. In your account the words and the sentences sweep along to a very fine climax and a very complete conclusion, but if I drew a picture of Clark standing in the door of the ballroom it might be any Anglo-Saxon pioneer interrupting any rude half-Indian frontier festivity, and might incur the still greater danger of not fulfilling fitly your very fine sentence. As a matter of illustration I would rather seek to represent an image of Clark’s advance into the West—the long line of frontier riflemen trailing away through the primeval forests with a gap in the woodlands showing a glimpse of the rolling hills and sky and an eagle wheeling in its flight—this as typifying the westward advance of civilization.

“Or else I should rather choose for an illustration a picture of the advance against Hamilton through that tragedy of the flood and ice and snow, of the melting winter—as typifying the dauntless energy of the Anglo-American purpose.



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"Either of these subjects is of a sort that might add I think very much to the text, while the ballroom scene would have the danger of weakening the story.

"Perhaps the best subject of all, however, is one which you have barely touched upon, and that is some general incident of the bitter and savage warfare of the frontier settlers in Kentucky when the Indians were let loose upon them. There are hundreds of tragic incidents in this in which the pencil can produce an infinitely better result than the pen, and it seems to me that the possibility of some such picture as that might fill out and complete the circle of your history far more than the exact illustration of a text which you give me. In other words our two arts might thus round the circle instead of advancing in parallel lines upon which it is almost impossible to keep them perfectly abreast. I feel, for instance, that my drawing of the single figure of Jefferson, as I described it to you, added far more to your fine text than a more elaborate illustration of some definite point might have done.

"If you do not agree with me in this I hope that you will understand that I am perfectly open to advice, for I am much interested in your series of papers and my prime desire is to carry out what I believe to be a very noble and admirable work that you are doing. . . . "

These pictures for Senator Lodge's history, after their completion and before their publication, were exhibited in various cities throughout the country, where they were enthusiastically received by critics and public. Many of them were sold, but one, "Clark on his Way to Kankaskia," was presented by the artist to Senator Lodge. He, in turn, gave it to President Roosevelt, who had taken a decided

fancy to it, and now it hangs in the Roosevelt house at Oyster Bay.

These were almost the last of Howard Pyle's historical pictures to appear in black-and-white in the magazines. Those which followed, and they were not many, were for the most part reproduced in full color. Perhaps the best of these were the illustrations to Basil King's story "The Hanging of Mary Dyer," one of the products of Howard Pyle's short association with *McClure's Magazine* as art editor in 1905. Mr. King wrote to him concerning them on November 3, 1906: "Permit me to thank you for the beautiful illustrations with which you have ennobled—the word is just—my little story of Mary Dyer, in the November issue of *McClure's*. I cannot but feel that if I had only seen the illustrations first, I should have written a better tale. I have to thank you, too, and most sincerely, for the kind suggestions with regard to one or two details in the story which are incorrect. It was the more important that Mary Dyer should come out of the prison with her hands unbound—as you represent her—from the fact that in the scene on the scaffold, which is absolutely historical, she is spoken of as though, at first, her hands were free. Until you pointed it out, I had not noticed the inconsistency in my own narrative. Again let me offer you my most genuine thanks. . . . "

In addition to all the pictures which treated directly of the history of the United States, Howard Pyle illustrated a number of stories which described the social life in certain sections of the country. The most outstanding of these were doubtless the pictures which were drawn for Margaret Deland's *Old Chester Tales*, published in *Harper's*

Monthly in 1898. Mrs. Deland expresses her admiration of them thus: “. . . I want to tell you how especially delighted I am with the two pictures for ‘Good for the Soul.’ After I had seen them I said to Mr. Alden that I did not think that even you could find anything that was illustratable in ‘The Thief’—which I consider a pretty poor sort of story. Mr. Alden smiled, and handed me silently your study of Judge Morrison in the garret looking over the papers. It was perfectly charming, and exactly like him! . . . I am quite certain that your part in the *Old Chester Tales* will cover a multitude of sins in the text. . . .”

Howard Pyle’s interest in the United States was not limited to the pictorial and historical side. He was always actively interested in the political campaigns of the day. He was a staunch Republican, devoted to nearly all the tenets of Republicanism, but absolutely opposed to anything which bordered upon corruption in the party. When Delaware was about to send Mr. John Edward Addicks, a charlatan from outside the state who had established residence in Delaware, as senator to Washington and was kept from doing so only by the persistence of a few members of the legislature, Howard Pyle wrote a letter of commendation to each of these gentlemen who had not succumbed to the Addicks money. One of these letters will show the spirit of his political nobility:

“March 12, 1901.

“My dear Mr. Chandler:

“May I be permitted to express to you somewhat the admiration I felt for the splendid fight you so successfully waged against veniality and corruption during the last

session of the legislature at Dover. The firm and determined stand you took and the successful conclusion of the battle which you waged against such tremendous odds and in spite of the enormous political pressure which must have been brought to bear upon you has won for you not only the admiration of all the honest men in the nation at large, but has made it a matter of great personal pride to all those of your fellow citizens whose wish it is to see justice vindicated and the unsavoriness of state politics rendered pure and clean.

“Sincerely,

“HOWARD PYLE.”

At the time of the Roosevelt campaign, in 1904, he was so intensely interested in the presidential contest, that he drew a cartoon and wrote a little article to go with it, both of which were published anonymously in *Collier's Weekly*. This was managed through the instrumentality of Mr. L. A. Coolidge, after Mr. Roosevelt had written the artist as follows:

“I think that a first-class drawing. My only question is whether it is not just a little too good to appeal to those whom cartoons in campaigns must influence. I shall send it at once on to Mr. Cortelyou and see if it cannot be used. I shall tell him that I think the mere fact that your name is attached to it will give it a real value with an audience particularly desirable to reach—in other words, while I think it too good to appeal to one class, I think it will appeal to another class which few cartoons can reach at all. . . .”¹ Mr. Coolidge wrote that it was regarded at headquarters as “the strongest thing that has been written during the

¹ Letter from Theodore Roosevelt, October 8, 1904.

campaign.” Then, also, after Judge Parker’s speech at the Madison Square Garden in which he accused both Roosevelt and Cortelyou of underhand dealings, Howard Pyle wrote a very forceful letter of defense, which was published in the *New York Tribune*.

These efforts were sufficient to establish his reputation with the party leaders, so that in 1908 he was asked to contribute something in the way of advertising matter to the Taft campaign. Mr. Richard V. Oulahan, the advertising manager for the National Committee, wrote him: “Mr. Coolidge has suggested that I get in touch with you, and as he is in town today I intended to see him and obtain from him some suggestions upon which I might base an appeal to you to give us the benefit of your experience and ability. I know confidentially of what you did four years ago, and I have been told that the cartoon entitled ‘Whither?’ with the accompanying reading matter entitled ‘How Are We Going to Vote This Year?’ was more effective as a campaign advertisement than anything else put out in behalf of President Roosevelt by the Literary Bureau of the National Committee. I shall be glad of any suggestions from you and trust that you may be able in both an artistic and literary way to assist us at the earliest opportunity. . . .”¹

What Howard Pyle did to support the candidacy of Mr. Taft can be seen in this letter written on November 8th by Mr. Oulahan after the election was settled:

“Now that the campaign is over I want to express to you my great appreciation of the work which you did in Mr. Taft’s behalf. In my opinion the suggestions which you made and the literary matter submitted by you had much

¹ Letter from R. V. Oulahan, September 6, 1908.

to do in bringing about the happy outcome of last Tuesday's contest. Your comparison of Taft and Bryan was a masterpiece of convincing logic. This is not merely my own individual opinion, but the opinion of many others in whose judgment I have great confidence. We obtained the insertion of your article in *Leslie's Weekly* and afterwards, following your suggestion, distributed it as a handbill in labor centers. Then, too, we used it as the basis for a sixteen-sheet billboard poster, and I saw to it that these posters were placed on billboards in Wilmington, in order that you might have an opportunity of inspecting them. This billboard advertising was confined at first to cities of over fifty thousand inhabitants, in states regarded as debatable. Subsequently we placed it in cities of between five thousand and fifty thousand inhabitants. We issued also an eight-sheet poster along the general lines of the handbill suggested by you, and this was displayed very generally throughout the country.

"Mr. Dolley, the State Chairman of Kansas, was so taken with the poster that he wanted it placed on every billboard in his state. The Republican County Committee of Westchester County, New York, regarded it as a splendid vote-getter and at its own expense filled all available billboard space in that county. While it is impossible to say just what effect this poster had on the voters, it is noteworthy that Westchester gave a greater proportionate increase in the vote for the Republican Presidential Ticket than any other county in the state of New York, and became the banner Republican county.

"The handbill obtained a very wide circulation. I telegraphed a description of it to Mr. Garretson, the editor of



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the *Cincinnati Times-Star*, who had organized a Taft Business Men's Club and had arranged for distributing campaign literature among men employed in shops and factories. Mr. Garretson asked us by telegraph to send thirty thousand copies of the handbill and when these were received he sent an enthusiastic response in which he appealed for twenty-five thousand more copies.

"I think you will understand from the above how valuable an asset your suggestion proved to be, and I feel that I cannot thank you enough for the great help which you gave the Literary Bureau and Mr. Taft's cause."

The artist's reply to Mr. Oulahan shows his own convictions in the matter:

"I have just received your exceedingly cordial and enthusiastic letter relating to the draft which I formulated for a hypothetical handbill in behalf of Mr. Taft's candidacy. I did not notice whether it had been used, nor did I particularly observe the posters of which you speak. My own mind was so very thoroughly made up that I read but little of the campaign literature outside of the printed words of Mr. Taft and Mr. Bryan and the President's letters. I suppose from my literary pursuits I am somewhat in the position of the baker to whom cakes and buns do not make any especial appeal. I regard the election of Mr. Taft as being so great and momentous a benefit to the country that the very best that any patriotic citizen could do was little enough to be done. . . ."¹

Howard Pyle was always an ardent admirer of Theodore Roosevelt, whose strenuous character moved him to hero-worship. They became fast friends. A book plate was made

¹ Letter to R. V. Oulahan, November 9, 1908.

for Mrs. Roosevelt; specially bound copies of the King Arthur books were presented to her; Mr. and Mrs. Pyle made visits to the White House. The admiration, however, was not all on the side of the artist, for Mr. Roosevelt held both the books and pictures of Howard Pyle in the greatest esteem. It is interesting to note that in the famous collection of books which he took with him on his hunting expedition in Africa was the *Robin Hood*. There is a touching paragraph in a letter written to Roosevelt on September 11, 1907: "Your sister, Mrs. Cowles, was in my studio here in Wilmington some time since, and she saw the original of the picture of Lincoln which appears in the current *Harper's Magazine*. She appeared to be moved by the pathos of the image which I had attempted to depict, and I told her then that the inspiration of your tireless and energetic struggle for the benefit of a great people had had a large if not a dominant influence upon my presenting the picture of your great fellow President. You also will stand forth in the future as one who has given the best efforts of his life to the combating of a gigantic evil and for the preservation of the best interests and the enlargement of the future happiness of his fellow-men. . . ."

CHAPTER IX

PHILOSOPHER AND MYSTIC

HOWARD PYLE grew up in an atmosphere of religious and philosophical inquiry. His mother, who was the dominant influence on his early life, was an original thinker; she was willing to take no dogmas on faith, but insisted upon formulating her own beliefs and theories. Consequently it was only natural that her son, who was always her devout admirer, should follow in her footsteps in this regard. When Mrs. Pyle became earnestly interested in the doctrines of Emanuel Swedenborg, she broke away from the old Quaker faith to which her ancestors had adhered for many generations, and molded her religious convictions in the light of her own spiritual reasoning, strengthened by the support of the Swedish mystic. This break from the Quaker church is clearly indicative of the mystic temper of her mind, for Quakers, while they do occasionally leave the church, usually do so in order to join a more ritualistic sect, very seldom to unite themselves with an order even more mystical than the Quaker church. The early years of Howard Pyle's life were colored with this spirit of mysticism which he inherited from his mother, and which was daily strengthened in him through his continual association with her. Yet the Quaker simplicity, handed down from generation to generation, remained undiminished under Swedenborgian influences. He retained throughout his life a simplicity of character which was most unusual for

one of his versatile genius, and which was probably due to the long tradition of Quakerism which lay behind him. And in spite of an active life in the material world, he was greatly given to metaphysical and spiritual speculation. He never lost, as long as he lived, the interest in things spiritual.

From the day when he first read *Their Wedding Journey* he had been an ardent admirer of William Dean Howells, whose novels he always read immediately on their appearance. Since Harper & Brothers were the publishers for both men, and since both of them were frequenters of the Franklin Square offices, they finally met. It was just after this meeting that Howells began turning his fiction into the channel of speculative thought, whereupon Howard Pyle wrote him a letter congratulating him on a more or less philosophic story "The Shadow of a Dream," which had just appeared in *Harper's Magazine*. This was the beginning of a long correspondence in which were discussed many topics of religious and philosophic import. A few of the letters which Howard Pyle wrote will give a very clear idea of the doubts which troubled them.

"Wilmington, Delaware.

"April 13, 1890.

"My dear Mr. Howells:

"I have just finished reading your story¹ from a copy of the May number of the *Harper's* and feel, now that I have the pleasure of your acquaintance, that it may not be entirely amiss for me to reach out a hand of congratulation.

"It seems to me that the most tragic element of your story is the pathetic commonness of it all; so much agony, so much torture, and all for the sake of the dryest of dry

¹ "The Shadow of a Dream."

husks. I can imagine poor Nevil awaking in the other world and with what anguish he would discover that in his effort to do right he had committed the seven-fold sin of striving to snatch *God's* scepter from *His* hand, and of and by his own wisdom, to judge betwixt right and wrong—that impossible task that we all endeavor to accomplish. If he could only have been less wise or more wise how easily all might have been solved! If he had had the wisdom of the world to sturdily assert, ‘All hair-splitting is stuff and nonsense! I love you and you love me and what use can there be in making ourselves miserable about it,’ would the poor weak woman not have leaned upon his strength? If he could have asserted that higher wisdom (with truth from his soul), ‘The past is God’s; the future is God’s and God’s purposes can only be fulfilled in the union of our love,’ how she would have clung to him. As it was he stood neither with his feet on the earth nor with his head in the Heavens but falling into the chaos of uncertainties dragged the poor girl with him.

“Did you ever try to solve that paradoxical truth that those who strive so hard to do the right thing insist upon making their own lives and the lives of those dearest to them so uncomfortable? Is it not that they are passing from the wholesome flower of natural love to the wholesome point of celestial love through the distasteful sourness of a spiritual change?

“Sometimes of late it has happened that a vivid flash of *real* truth has for a moment lit up the smoky murkiness of my self-desired intelligence. One such flash of God’s lighting came to me lately and it seems to light up this story of yours. As nearly as I can word it it is this—The King-

dom of Heaven is not to be gained by self-denial nor by virtue—no, *not by goodness itself*. If it had flashed upon Nevil's eyeballs instead of mine perhaps it would not have been necessary for him to die by the sleeping car.

“Very sincerely yours,

“HOWARD PYLE.”

In his reply to this letter, Howells defends Nevil as a victim of circumstance, at the same time expressing his own spiritual doubts and his inability to refrain from speculation in regard to things above him. He concludes by saying that he often feels that peace lies only in the giving up of one's will. This is the answer sent by Howard Pyle:

“Wilmington, Delaware,

“May 5, 1890.

“My dear Mr. Howells:

“I have resisted, and resisted quite manfully I flatter myself, the temptation to answer your kind reply to my letter relating to your story. But like most of my temptations, the itch to say something more has gotten the better of me.

“I think you misunderstood my remarks concerning Nevil. I regard him distinctly as a hero and not the less a hero because he wrestled vainly with an angel of truth. Such struggles are upon a higher plane than my standing of dull commonplace and my pity for him was only pity for the suffering of a high and noble nature. Your story ran parallel with a truth with which my mind was then very pregnant and which you again assert in your letter—that all must suffer into the truth.

"Then, if it be not too presumptuous, I would question very seriously the wisdom of clinging to the earthly plane. If one does not meddle with things higher how is one ever to be lifted out of the slough? Again it seems to me a very doubtful matter whether one dies out of one's difficulties. I apprehend that most of us die *into them*.

"I have been very much impressed with that of late, so much so that the idea has formulated itself into a kind of story¹ which I have begun and may perhaps finish. I doubt if it will do for publication, but I wish I might find the courage to ask for an opinion as to its truth from your broader and wiser reasoning.

"I do not know that I accept your gloss to my revelation, as you pleased to call it. Self-denial and virtue and goodness *may* win the Kingdom of Heaven when not practised for the sake of self-denial and virtue and goodness but—I don't know.

"Yours sincerely,

"HOWARD PYLE."

"Wilmington, Delaware,

"December 21st, 1890.

"My dear Mr. Howells:

"... I wish I knew what has been the result of your last summer's reading upon the subject of dreams. I myself mistrust all such philosophical speculations most heartily. They have such a taking and tawdry glitter, but submitted to the Divine Fire in the Crucible of Truth they *never* fail either to vanish in smoke or to crumble to dust. I have

¹ The story alluded to is one that was later developed into "In Tenebras," published in *Harper's Magazine*, February, 1894, vol. lxxxviii, p. 392.

always been very much interested in Natural Physics myself. Lately I was reading a little handbook on the subject of later Astronomy. It is marvelous to what almost supreme heights research has led the modern philosopher. In description of spectrum analysis of the sun especially one hung almost breathless, for the speculators touched so close—so very close upon the true heart of all life that it seemed as though they *must* feel the tremor of its beating pulse. But what is the result? A ‘theory’ either that the vast tremendous source of our light is kept alive by a dribbling shower of meteors pouring into it or by *shrinkage of its surface!!!* One hardly knows whether to laugh or to cry at such poor, blind, helpless stumbling. So I apprehend it is with your dreaming philosophers who put on such farsighted magnifiers to see what is under their very noses as clear as day and as transparent as truth. Of course you understand that I do not pretend to judge of such things in the light of my own ha’-penny dip!

“Very sincerely yours,
“HOWARD PYLE.”

On December 22, 1890, Howells had sent a letter inclosing a copy of a dream-paper which he had written, and stating in the most fervent manner the trying doubts under which he was laboring. To this Howard Pyle replied:

“Wilmington, Delaware,
“December 29th, 1890.

“My dear Friend:

“My not having answered your letter sooner is not upon account of lack of will or interest. Twice I undertook to write to you and twice I failed. There is so much that I



AT THE GATE OF THE CASTLE
From
PEIRE VIDAL, TROUBADOUR
Harper's Magazine, 1903

should like to say—so much that I cannot say and so much that I have no right to say.

“ . . . But I think more than anything else I felt the implied—shall I say confidence in me?—in sending me your ‘dream-letter’ to read. I was very, very much moved by it—especially taking it in conjunction with that part of your letter in which you tell me of your difficulties in *realizing* a belief in a future state. I say ‘realizing’ for I really think that the belief is there and only needs to be realized. My own feelings upon that point have been so actual and positive for so long a time that my mind has long since ceased to be busied with the rationalities of truth excepting for the delight of confirming what *is*. It seems to me that the real answer to that all-question lies not in the pros and cons of logical reasoning (confirmatory as those pros and cons are) but in the actuality of one’s own done problems. When one senses the actual struggle between Heaven and Hell that goes on upon the solid plane of one’s own individuality it seems impossible not to believe in the equal actuality of a Heaven and Hell.

“However, all that is aside from that which I had it in mind to say to you. In the first emotion of sympathy for you and sincere pity for one who no doubt suffers what I once suffered myself I undertook with a monstrous egotism to offer you such crutches of reasonings as had one time helped me in my stumblings. (You see that I also am dealing frankly with you.) The result was that in the act of testing the strength of those old, disused staves they broke down under me so that I fell almost into the slough myself. Since then I have eaten a great deal of humble pie of a very wholesome if not of a savory kind.

"Nevertheless I *do* think these staves are of the very greatest help. Reasoning cannot teach a man to walk but it is the lantern that God has vouchsafed us in the night and by it we may direct our steps (carefully and guardedly) until the brightness of a larger day shows us the highroad with a greater clearness.

"I hope that you will not think me over-bold in venturing a suggestion, but do you not think that your reading of Swedenborg has been maybe a stumbling-block? I remember you were reading *Heaven and Hell* when I first met you. I think it is an awful book. To my mind Swedenborg was the Divinely inspired prophet—no; the *mouthpiece* of Jehovah. But may not one be a mouthpiece without retaining? I merely throw this out as a query. You speak in your dream-letter of the 'dullness' of the other world. To my mind there is little choice in the eternity of discomfort between the Heaven and the Hell Swedenborg pictures—and neither of them read to me like *fact*. I hope not to go to either.

"The first book that I ever read of his was *Divine Love and Wisdom*. I read it through almost in agony for at that time there was little of it that I could understand and it seemed to me as though God had maybe shut my eyes to what I wanted most of all to know—to the only thing worth knowing—the secret of Life and Death. But one by one the truths came until a real glow of light began to grow before me. After that I read some others of the theological works—*The True Christian Religion* and I think the *Divine Providence*. Last of all I began reading the *Arcana Coelestia*, slowly and by fits and starts. I have not yet finished the third volume though I do not know why I do not read it

more diligently—for, next to the Bible upon which it stands, it is the greatest book that I have ever read. It is the very word of God and the history of every man's soul. If you can read it (I am afraid I cannot) I am very certain that you will find all your doubts removed.

“ . . . But your dream-letter;—I do most positively and emphatically believe that in those earlier dreams you did actually see your daughter. In the later ones, I have as little doubt that you are being cruelly hoaxed by just such spirits as make themselves felt to you in the darkness of the night. Liars in themselves they have no greater pleasure than is to be derived from misleading poor, blind, helpless, stumbling men in this world. Should such appear visibly to me I would set it to the account of an overworked stomach. I may be prejudiced in such matters but I never could see that spirits ever could or ever did tell anybody anything that was worth the knowing—even Swedenborg confesses to having been deceived by them. It seems to me to be such an absolute duty to plough over ground and sow our seed here in the good old honest earth that one should resolutely turn from such—shall I dare to say unprofitable waste of God's time?

“ . . . I wish that I could see you some time. I love to talk of these things and maybe in mutual discussion many things might be cleared away for both of us. Beside, there is a more practical concern that I would like to discuss. Do you ever come to New York? If you should come any time soon and will let me know, I will run on and meet you. . . .

“Very sincerely yours,

“HOWARD PYLE.”

"Wilmington, Delaware,

"January 25, 1891.

"My dear Friend:

"I hope that my last and very voluminous letter—which I have sometimes thought was of a rather over-massive order—was not so extensive as to preclude my writing you again. Anyhow, I take the risk of it—for I have once more to ask of you a favor.

"I live a life here of such hermit-like seclusion that there are many men, such as yourself, for instance—toward whom I grow to feel a deep and sincere liking though my only commerce with them is through the stiff and clumsy channel of 'letter-writing.'

"Maybe I sometimes come nearer to such men through the medium of my work and so, swinging the circle, I come to the favor I have to ask. It is that you will accept a pair of drawings (which, relying upon your complaisance, I send by this same mail) unconsiderable but not, I hope, altogether inartistic.

"Will you accept them—as being a little part of myself?

"Very sincerely yours,

"HOWARD PYLE."

"Wilmington, Delaware,

"February 15, 1891.

"My dear Friend:

"I am very glad that you were pleased with the two little drawings which I sent you. I thought that maybe you would be glad to have them—not from any intrinsic merit in themselves but because of a certain kindness which I do believe you feel toward the author.

"You have been so much in my thoughts lately—largely, I think, because of your little poem in *Harper's*. It made me feel again the useless ache of sympathy which your former letter to me aroused. What a dreadful valley of shadows it must be through which you are passing!

"You spoke in your last letter almost in a tone of resentment of scientists forbidding us 'our humble hopes of a hereafter.' I do not feel as you do concerning the scientific *fiat* of nothingness. The old must die before the new can spring from its roots and these lusty sons of Arrak are laying a wholesome axe to the rotting trunk of a bygone Church. That old trunk will never bud again, so let it go and the sooner the better.

"But their work is a work of destruction, and science can never build up what it is thus cutting down. It is impossible for any scientific labor to give us a new Church for the old order which it has made food for the burning. No scientifics can give any man a belief in a future state, not even—will you forgive me for saying so?—James's *Psychology*.

"It seems to me that there are very few people who really do believe now-a-days. Many persuade themselves, but if you ask a thousand men—man to man and soul to soul—perhaps nine hundred and ninety-nine will shake the head. But does that necessarily say that the one who *does* believe is wrong? Tens of thousands died in the flood and only Noah and his family floated in the Ark. Now the earth is again covered and hidden in a deluge of truth and light—but still there are a few cockles floating in spite of the rain of scientific dogmatics.

" . . . I have a reader who reads to me in the mornings while I work. We are now occupied with the *Arcana Coelestia*. I never knew what there was in it before! I have found that whatever remains of turgid doubts yet lingered in my mind are now clean gone, never, I believe, to return, and only the truth is left as light as day. . . .

"Very sincerely yours,

"HOWARD PYLE."

So much philosophical thinking could not go on without something being produced in the way of reading matter. At first the ideas took form in the shape of an essay, which was sent to Howells for his judgment concerning it. He evidently found many things to approve in it, for his letter is decidedly commendatory.

"Boston, Massachusetts,

"May 17, 1891.

"My dear Mr. Pyle:

"I have read your thoughts on immortality and infinity with great interest, and with a full sense of the strength of your reasoning. I have never seen the subject presented in that way and the logic seems to gather mass and weight as you go on. There is something singularly impressive in the summing up. But perhaps because my brain takes feeble hold of propositions and conclusions, I found myself all the time wishing that these fresh and striking thoughts could have been somehow dramatically presented. As they stand they will appeal to a certain order of mind, but in the other form they would appeal to all orders of mind. They really give me glimpses of truth that I had not had before; they gave me proof, they gave me hope. I fancy I should have

to read them many times over to get all there is in them; but as it is I have got out very much.

“Sincerely your friend,

“W. D. HOWELLS.”

“Wilmington, Delaware,

“June 14, 1891.

“My dear Friend:

“I hope you do not think me the most ungrateful and ungracious man of your acquaintance; I am sure (that is upon the face of appearances) you have amply sufficient ground for so thinking. But I am *not* ungrateful for your kind and thoughtful reading of my thoughts, and I do fully appreciate what you said in your letter.

“It—the letter—was received just upon the eve of my going away for a holiday for a couple of weeks or so to an out-of-the-way corner of the world—a queer, shabby little seaside resort among the salt marshes and bald white sand hills of Cape Henlopen. I go there—or rather my family goes there—every summer, and I must say that there is something very delightful to me in the ‘squalor’ of our surroundings and the delightful unconventionality of the home life in our little barn of a cottage.

“However, that is apart from the question; what I began by saying was that this summer I was compelled to take my holiday earlier than usual, for we hope shortly to have that greatest of all blessings befall us—to give another life to this dear, beautiful old world.

“I tried once or twice to write you while there, but was unable to gather my thoughts together—they fly abroad like guinea hens when I open the closed doors of my work-a-day life.

"We had Mr. and Mrs. Charles Parsons staying with us—how delightful it would have been had we but had you! I don't know, however, whether you would be so fond of roughing it.

"About my 'thoughts,' I don't know whether you quite caught my idea in sending them to you. I have had them by me for some time, working a little now and a little then until, at last, I began to wonder whether, after all, I had not undertaken a Sisypheus task of rolling a dead stone up a hill—only to have it roll back again after I had got it fairly to the top. Of course what I have already written—that which you read—is the dullest and driest of all. It is only digging the ground for the seed I would like to plant. But do I dig my ground? Am I really rolling a stone away? Do I prove my premises?

"I think more of your literary judgment than of any man I know and that is why I sent you my preparatory lucubrations. Would you continue them if you were I?

"You say in your letter that you wish that the thoughts could have been cast in a more dramatic form. That, I apprehend, is impossible. That which is emotional *never* convinces. The emotional argument, for instance, that *the good God who made all things well could not create man to curse him with hopes that can never be fulfilled* is fundamentally true, but it can never convince. First prove that God *is* and *is good* and then the other rests sure-founded upon it. So, I take it, the only sure method is first to convince and then to emotionalize. . . .

"Very sincerely your friend,

"HOWARD PYLE."

This essay embodying Howard Pyle's thoughts on immortality was never completed. In the meantime he had begun making illustrations for a series of Howells's poems which were appearing in *Harper's Monthly* and which were later published under the title, *Stops of Various Quills*.¹ In these poems, to quote from Delmar Gross Cooke's literary study of Howells, "we feel that pessimism is assuming the cast and complexion of a philosophy. And it is all-pervasive. Howard Pyle, who illustrates the book lavishly, has expressed it perfectly, albeit after the German mythological manner of the Boecklin school. The baubles of the mask, the death's head, the thorns, and the bitter chalice are its symbols. The fiddler Death, or the grim reaper with sickle and glass, stalks through its pages while angels weep and mortals bid him stay. Melancholia is written large over all. . . ." When the book was finally published and the original drawings were returned to the artist, he sent the picture of the Sphinx to Howells, who had expressed great admiration for it. In a letter sent simultaneously with the picture, he said, ". . . It seemed to me that, in your poems, the piping Pan of your soul went up into just such twilight altitudes as I have tried to depict, and hearing the sudden dim rustle of wings, turned so to see *his* Sphinx crouching where she had not been before. I want you to have the picture for that reason. . . ."²

The connection with Howells and the stimulus which his correspondence gave to Howard Pyle's mysticism led also to the writing of two short stories of rather an unusual nature, "In Tenebras"³ and "To the Soil of the Earth."⁴

¹ Published 1895, Harper & Brothers.

² To W. D. Howells, November 3, 1895.

³ *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, February, 1894, vol. lxxxviii, p. 392.

⁴ *The Cosmopolitan*, June, 1892, vol. xiii, p. 217.

Howells read and approved both, and when he was editor of the *Cosmopolitan* he accepted the second for that publication. These stories form a fitting counterpart to *Stops of Various Quills*; they are expressive of the same pessimism, but combine a little more realism with their mystic qualities.

But the greatest achievement which was the direct result of Howells's influence was the writing of the novel *Rejected of Men*, which was not published until nine years after it had been begun, but which was continually rewritten and revised during the intervening time. The scene of this novel was modern New York, but the plot was that of the influence and crucifixion of Christ, the whole transported with all its details from ancient Palestine to the contemporary American city. Everything about the story was modernized, but the outlines of the plot were rigidly kept just as they are in the Bible. When Howells read it for the first time, in April, 1895, he was immensely pleased with it, and praised it without stint. At the same time, however, he was afraid that no magazine would dare print it.

Alden had read it during the preceding year, when it was in a much less finished state than it was when Howells found it so stirring. Alden wrote on July 20, 1894:

"Much as I admire this story for certain things, I must confess frankly that it jars upon some sacred inviolable sense of the Christ and in some passages—especially the electrocution—is a profound shock. I appreciate your intention, and grant that you have successfully made your point. I cannot feel, however, that the motif justifies the wrench involved in the translation of the divine drama from its oriental environment, from the Syrian sky and the Sea of Galilee (where nature becomes so essential a part of this



HER HEAD AND SHOULDERS HUNG OVER THE SPACE WITHOUT
From
THE MAID OF LANDEVINNEC
Harper's Magazine, 1904

singular life) to the sordid and belittling ensemble of New York City.

"The situations are strong and the young man's part is presented very simply and naturally; but it is *disillusionment*. Yes—that is what you intended; but the spiritual no more than the emotional life of man goes on save by illusion. Even the transference of the drama from Jerusalem to the Augustan Rome would have involved an immense surrender. Nay, if the Christ life had been spent as a public ministration mainly in the city of Jerusalem instead of the Judean country, how much would have been lost that essentially belongs to such a life!

"I cannot but feel that the publication of the story in our magazine would grieve many readers. And it would mislead many, since to many it would seem no very important matter whether such a Christ as is here presented were accepted or rejected—and this I think would not agree with your intention.

"I have enjoyed reading the story because to me it has been translated through the knowledge I have of your intimate purpose.

"I may be wholly wrong in my judgment of the story. The fact that one has a certain quality of sensibility does not prove that sensibility true. But I have been frank and you will excuse it."

Mr. Alden's objections to it seemed to be those of every publisher to whom the book was offered. It went the rounds, and was repeatedly turned down. Then after a gap of seven years during which time it was again revised and materially changed it was accepted by *Harper's* through the influence of George Harvey, and published in 1903.

Howard Pyle wrote to *Harper's* on June 26th of that year concerning his feeling in regard to its publication:

"I do not know whether I feel more of apprehension or more of curiosity in looking forward to the way in which the world will take my book *Rejected of Men*. Perhaps the world will not take it at all.

"I suppose if a light comedian were called upon to express his views it would hardly be expected of him to give a dissertation upon the tragic aspects of life. The case is very much the same with me; I have been so long identified as a writer of children's books that the world will hardly be prepared to receive such curious thoughts as I have here tried to set forth; indeed, I am not sure that the world will not resent or at least deprecate such an attempt from me as being too wide a departure from my assigned channel of work.

"The great problems of life and death have, however, always largely occupied my thoughts, even from my youngest childhood. Even in my infancy, the fear of death and annihilation hung over me like a cloud, and that cloud was not dissipated, but became rather more dark and dense as I advanced into youth and adolescence. I was a sceptic in spite of myself, for I found no one who could enlighten my doubts. My questions seemed only to entangle any professor of divinity into what seemed to be a net of inextricable contradictions, so that, instead of affording me some rational ground of belief, I saw only the absurdities of their arguments.

"Accordingly, whatever change of views I may since have arrived at, I have had to reach by myself, by my own reason

and without such outside assistance—excepting such as I could obtain from the writings of Swedenborg.

“Such a self-education in reasoning makes one rather radical in one’s opinions and I suppose that my opinions are very radical indeed.

“And radical opinions impel a man to express himself almost as against his own volition. So they have impelled me to write my book. I began it a number of years ago after a conversation with Mr. Alden—the editor of *Harper’s Monthly*—and it was my first intention to tell only the story of the Rich Young Man. When I began the work, however, it grew under my hands into very different proportions and significance from the limitations with which it was begun. I think I began it about eight years ago. Since then I have written it and rewritten it, and reshaped it, and corrected it, and amended it, until it now has hardly anything of its original form.

“I do not know that it would ever have been completed had it not been for the encouragement given me from time to time by my friend W. D. Howells. I don’t suppose Mr. Howells has any idea how much he has heartened me as to the progress of my work from time to time, and by telling me how much he liked the method in which I was trying to embody my thought.

“It seems to be a very short story for eight years of intermittent work, but I can say it was written very earnestly and with great sincerity of conviction, and however the world may take it I have yet the satisfaction of knowing that I have said my say with every sentiment of reverence and very strong belief in that which I was trying to say.”

Rejected of Men, when it did finally appear, did not make

any great stir in the literary world. Since it appeared over the name of Howard Pyle, who was too well known as a writer of children's books, it probably never had a chance among the seasoned readers of novels; but to a small group of intelligently interested persons it brought a new idea, and a vital subject for discussion. One friend of the author's, James H. Canfield, librarian at Columbia University, found the book so stimulating that he circulated it among various of his clergymen acquaintances in order to get their impressions. In a letter to Howard Pyle dated June 22, 1904, he quoted the following as coming from a leading New York minister:

"I write to report that I have read *Rejected of Men* by Howard Pyle, as you suggested: with growing interest and, finally, with entire admiration. The audacity of it is simply stupendous, and the success so simply achieved, with such sharp delineation of character and of environment, and with such marked ultra-modern contrasts as effective as they are bizarre, is a triumph of psychology and a masterpiece of dramatic inventiveness. And the queer viewpoint and weird mystery of the whole tale amid its matter-of-factness, and the unearthly—yet most earthly—inconclusiveness of it all, are thrilling and extraordinary. Pyle is the Richard Strauss of historical portraiture and reproduction!

"Then the artistry of its conception and execution in detail, the power of social perspective in drawing with its sharp class separation of people and experiences so near and yet so far—is not all this remarkable?

"Yet what to do with it? how to use it? how to utilize and pass on the impression made upon myself? This at

present puzzles me; and in Ciceronian-Catalinian language, is evasive and elusive.

“‘But enough—although much more thinking must be done, even if talking stops. I shall ruminate and reflect much.’”

In reply to another one of Canfield's letters Howard Pyle gives a very interesting sidelight on some of the other criticisms which were not so favorable:

“ . . . I judge from your letter to Dr. MacCracken that he has taken some exception to the rather hard and unlovely characterization I have felt obliged to give my image of the Christ. He is not the only one who has taken such exception.

“I may say that I purposely made my picture of the Master in that guise because, looking upon Him with the eyes of a Pharisee, that would be the way in which I would behold Him. For so it was that He appeared to all the Scribes, Pharisees, and Levites of His day. If I had made Him otherwise I would not have told my story with the fidelity that is its only excuse. Had I made Him unrepellent it would not at all have demonstrated why it was that He was rejected of intelligent men.

“I suppose this point, though obvious, is rather subtle. At any rate it has been widely overlooked by many of my friends. One unusually intelligent critic said to me, ‘I do not see that it would matter whether one did or did not accept a belief in such a Christ as that—,’ entirely overlooking the fact that his own remark was the strongest corroborative proof possible of the contention in my book. For I think I may say that I have not in any particular departed from the exact and literal statement of the facts as we have them. . . . It may also, perhaps, be incidentally interesting to you

to know that I had the work by me for eight or ten years before publishing it, so that it represents a mature and not a hasty opinion of my subject."

A far superior book, however, to *Rejected of Men*, far more expressive of the spiritual nature of its author, was *The Garden Behind the Moon*, which was published in 1896. In February, 1889, both Mr. and Mrs. Pyle went to Jamaica for a short trip, leaving their only son in Wilmington with Mrs. Pyle's mother. During their absence he was taken sick and died before the parents could be reached. It was to both Mr. and Mrs. Pyle a terrific and staggering blow, the effects of which could not easily be softened, but the father found some outlet for his grief in the writing of this book. There is more poetry, more beauty in it than in any other of his productions, and it is movingly sad. It sets forth in an allegorical way the very mystical theory of life and death at which the author had arrived after years of questioning.

The only explanation we have from the author as to the meaning of the allegory is in the following letter to Miss Phoebe Griffith:

"... There is indeed an intended inner meaning to *The Garden Behind the Moon*, but to explain it would require a long dissertation at the end of which that certain indefinable mystery with which I intended to surround the story would be altogether dissipated.

"I may tell you so much as this, although you probably have guessed it for yourself, that the Moon Angel represents the Angel of Death, and the Garden means that place in the other life to which little children go after they live the life of the world and before their minds and faculties

are yet developed; that the Iron Man means not only the temptations, but the knowledges which belong to this world from which higher endeavor and diviner purpose must be rescued ere it can develop into full freedom of life; that the boy represents a certain spiritual purpose by means of which we overcome the temptations and knowledges of the world.

"There are many other things intended in the story, chief of which is the marriage between the inner and divine life and the spiritual purpose of manhood, which, however, I can hardly make clear to you in a letter. . . ."

In addition to these two books—*Rejected of Men* and *The Garden Behind the Moon*—which are interpretative of the mystical side of Howard Pyle's character, there are a number of illustrations which do almost as much to bring it out. There is the series of pictures for Edwin Markham's "Man with the Hoe" published in 1900, concerning one of which—that for the "Song of Peace"—Augustus St. Gaudens said, ". . . The virility and poetry and the beauty of it are remarkable. . . ." ¹ Howard Pyle himself wrote in regard to these pictures:

"I do not know why it is that I should have drifted into the position of an illustrator of what is sometimes called the 'poetical essay.'

"Some years ago I began illustrating the occasional poems of W. D. Howells which were afterward collected into a volume called *Stops of Various Quills*.

"Whether or not the illustrations were very successful I do not know, but since then I have every now and then been called upon to illustrate a poem of the analytical sort.

¹ Letter to Howard Pyle, June 20, 1902.

"I think the music and the lilt of Mr. Markham's poems lift them quite above the level of the rhymed essay. The music and the rhythm catch your ear before your mind grasps the substantial thought which they clothe and the fact that there is thought behind adds in no small degree to the enjoyment of his oftentimes ornate wording. Oftentimes the songs possess a great metrical beauty and even in the more somber verses there is a rhythmic stride that catches the ear like the music of the measured tramp of many feet.

"This at least is my own feeling towards Markham's poems and they added in no small degree to my pleasure in illustrating them.

"Such illustrations are not very easy to make, there are so many requirements demanded by such text. There is no palpable feeling to seize upon. The illustrations should be somber and yet at the same time not devoid of a certain at least decorative beauty; they should in no instance limit or circumscribe the idea—upon the contrary they should carry forward the thought of the author—not upon the same line but upon a closely parallel line.

"This of course is very difficult of achievement. In looking over my illustrations I feel that I have fallen far short of achievement. Nevertheless, the effort itself has carried with it a very distinct and cumulative pleasure. . . ."¹

And then there was the marvelous group of paintings for *The Century* which was entitled "The Travels of the Soul," and which, beautifully reproduced in full color, was the despair and admiration of many rival artists in the winter of 1902.

Howard Pyle had to an immense degree the power of

¹ Letter to Doubleday, Page & Company, December 4, 1900.

moving one to mystical thoughts both with his pictures and with his written words. There is an indefinable quality about his productions of the spiritual kind which render them distinct and stimulating. The soft, clear expression of his mysticism is often more convincing and decidedly more moving than the outpourings of many mystic philosophers. One little anecdote, as given in a correspondence with Richard Watson Gilder, will show what a subtle, persuasive and beautiful turn his prose explanation of his spiritual ideas could take, and at the same time will show the extreme difficulty he had in writing them. *The Century* had accepted a picture entitled "Hope and Memory" which he had painted some years before, and when they were about to publish it Gilder wrote on December 4, 1900:

"With regard to that interesting picture of yours which we wish to print, 'Hope and Memory,' could you not send us a few lines—a prose poem, if you wish, or a Biblical chant—no matter how brief—putting into words the thought that you meant to convey?"

To this Howard Pyle replied, "I have meditated without any result upon some text for my 'Hope and Memory' picture. Whatever is written should, it seems to me, have the ring of poetry about it and I am tone deaf as to poetry—I can neither write it nor understand it very well when it is written.

"My Muse has sweated over the task that you have set me to do. She has sat upon occasions for maybe an hour at a time without producing any result and I do not believe that it is possible for her to do the work demanded of her.

"If I may make a suggestion it would be as follows. You may know that I have illustrated Edwin Markham's book of

poems. I think he would be able to write the verse to go with the picture and if he will do so the Muse above spoken of will most joyfully make you the very best pen-and-ink decorations for it that she is able to produce. . . ."

Gilder preferred to have Edith Thomas write the verses, and requested that the artist write a short account of just what he meant to portray in the picture, in order that Miss Thomas might have something as a basis for her poem. This Howard Pyle did, and when Mr. Gilder received what had been written, he hastened to inform the author, "You don't suppose I would let anybody rewrite that prose poem. Oh! no. Very many thanks."¹

¹ Letter from Richard Watson Gilder, January 29, 1901.

CHAPTER X

SCHOOLS AND THEORIES OF ART

*W*HEN, after eighteen years of unremitting work as an illustrator, Howard Pyle had firmly established himself as a master of his profession, he began to feel a pressing desire to pass on to others the knowledge which he had gained from so much experience. His opinions on art instruction were by no means orthodox; they were outgrowths of successful practical work, unimpeded by the cant of any schools of artistic method. He himself had risen largely by dint of his own application and energy, without the aid of long study abroad and without very much schooling at home; in the light of this success, he was confident that he could materially help the younger generation of artists by showing them how he had learned to master his art, and by freeing them from the cramping influence of the methods usually taught in the academies and schools. Accordingly, when the Drexel Institute of Arts and Sciences in Philadelphia asked him to conduct a class in illustration during the winter of 1894-1895, he immediately accepted the offer, and in October undertook his new duties. This was the beginning of a career of teaching which was to last almost to the end of his life.

In the roll of this first class in illustration at the Drexel Institute were thirty-six names, among which were those of Violet Oakley, Jessie Willcox Smith, and Maxfield Parrish. With this group of enthusiasts he worked endlessly and tire-

lessly, putting into operation all the ideas and theories which he had gleaned from the preceding years of his work. All winter long he went back and forth from Wilmington to Philadelphia once every week to superintend the study of these promising young men and women. His interest was thoroughly aroused; he was determined to make a contribution to teaching that would immeasurably aid his pupils in their upward struggles. Such excellent results were manifest after this first year that the success of the class was assured. Howard Pyle became almost immediately the center of art instruction in Philadelphia and one of the most celebrated teachers of illustration in America. But his class was so rapidly increasing in numbers that steps had to be taken to keep it from growing too large. He decided that he could do more service by limiting membership in it to advanced students only, to those who were almost ready to begin on some phase of practical work. Part of a letter written to a prospective student will give an idea of what the aims were: " . . . My class was formed more for the purpose of encouraging imaginative drawing in the more advanced students, and to teach a pupil how not to copy the life model until the pupil knows how to copy it. The parallel in music would be the avoidance of mechanical precision in playing the notes and the run of the scales. You must first know how to play the scales accurately and strike the chords with precision, and then you may be taught how to avoid that same mechanical precision. . . . It is too often thought that illustrative art requires less practice than painting in colors. The fact is that it requires a great deal more knowledge and much more freedom of technique; for I observe that our painters who come from abroad are very



"There Cap'n Goldsack goes creeping, creeping, creeping,
Looking for his treasure down below!"

From

CAP'N GOLDSACK

Harper's Magazine, 1902

often unable to illustrate, while the illustrator (if he chooses to do so) may paint successful pictures. . . ."¹

A further expression of his views occurs in a letter to Dr. McAlister, the president of the Drexel Institute:

" . . . Two young men came to my class from the Academy of Design. Both of them had studied thoroughly from life, and I was told that one of them (I cannot now remember his name) had made the best drawing from the nude that was made in Philadelphia. I set them to work before the draped model, telling them not to copy the model but to make a picture, and I explained what was the difference between creative and imitative art. These two students knew absolutely nothing as to real creative art—the one who was so great at drawing from the nude was dazed and bewildered in front of his board, and there was not one single touch he put to the canvas that was right. The very youngest member of my Composition Class could have made a better attempt than he. His best knowledge was only a huge accumulation of dead, inert matter in which there was not one single little spark of real life, and—though I hope in this I may be wrong—I question whether any reconstruction of this knowledge is possible with him.

"We must not let our students—young beginners with tender, growing lives—we must not let them grow into such rank and fruitless maturity. But how shall we reach them?

"I think first of all that they should be taught in the very beginning to believe that all they are learning of technique is only a dead husk in which must be enclosed the divine life of creative impulse. I think they should be stimulated to think things out of doors—to talk of living things and to

¹ Letter to Miss Sanford, September 25, 1896.

draw them, describing them maybe in words as well as in pictures. . . . ”¹

At the beginning of his third year at the Drexel Institute, Howard Pyle began to have what amounted to complete control of the entire Art Department. The following letter to Dr. McAlister gives something of his plans, and shows very clearly how he had thrown himself body and soul into this attempt to benefit young artists: “. . . It seems to me that both a day class and a night class might be established, its aim being to work from a life model draped in costume instead of being nude. . . . I would do my best to instruct them in such knowledge as I myself possess in drawing the living figure into my picture.

“In sounding the students I find them enthusiastic in their desire to embark upon such a course of study, and they tell me that the only difficulty would be that such classes would be too large—a generous fault, I think. . . .

“This work of a draped life class should not, of course, interfere with my lectures—it should supplement them. I think my lectures are useful, but I think they only give in theory that which I want here to render practical to all. There are in Europe classes similar to this that I suggest, but none, I think, that devote the attention of the students to accomplish such really practical results as those at which I aim.

“I am very desirous of helping the coming generation of artists, and if I could hope to accomplish the purpose which I have in mind, I would be very glad to give two full days of each week to the Drexel Institute. . . . In those days I would come early to Philadelphia and would devote the first

¹ Letter to Dr. James McAlister, October 6, 1896.

half hour or so to seeing and talking with any student who might like to consult me concerning his or her work. I would then go through the Art Schools from the primary department to the life class, giving, so far as I am able to give it, an opinion on the work done—holding in view the fact that it should be directed not to academic perfection, but to final use in the actual world of Art. . . .

“In the afternoon I would deliver a lecture such as I have been doing in the last two years. In the evening I would criticise the night class from the draped model, say from half past seven to half past nine or from eight to ten o’clock. I recognize that this may be a great burden to undertake, but I feel myself to be very strong physically, and I think that I would be able to accomplish it at least for one season and until the work of the Institute stands upon a more solid ground than it seems to stand upon at present. . . .

“I stand prepared to give to the Institute all the assistance I can. I know of no better legacy a man can leave to the world than that he had aided others to labor at an art so beautiful as that to which I have devoted my life. . . .”¹

The immense personal interest which he took in his individual pupils is exemplified in a letter to one of them: “. . . I do not recognize, as you do, that you failed in your first attempt in my class. If you had done so I do not see that it would have been of any matter, for you are beginning upon something so entirely new and foreign to all methods of teaching that it is not possible but that we shall both meet with failures in the beginning, I in imparting knowledge and you in receiving it.

“I cannot tell you how weighted down with responsibility

¹ Letter to Dr. James McAlister, April 7, 1896.

of you all I was after the morning's class. It was not that I was discouraged with your work at all, but that in seeing the futile attempts with which some of you began I realized how much the responsibility of your success or failure weighed upon myself. I felt your discouragement as keenly as though it had been my own, but you must have courage to learn and to persist in your endeavor or else the burden of your discouragement will lay upon me also.

"In such moments of discouragement as I felt yesterday I always feel within myself that after all we are only here to learn in this life that which we shall carry forward in the life to come. In that life the flower of perfection will not spring from the things in which we have succeeded, but from the things in which we have failed. Were this life all that we had to live, such disappointments would be terrible indeed, but as it is not the only life we have to live they are only the seed implanted for the rich fulfillment. All this I would have liked to have said to you instead of writing it, and I want you to have courage to go on with your work which is so much more beautiful and worthy than you think it is. . . ." ¹

As Howard Pyle developed his methods of teaching, he conceived the idea that the truest criterion for judging the work of pupils was the practical use of the work which they produced. He wrote early in the fall of 1896 to Clyde De Land, " . . . You will learn more in one week of actual work to be reproduced in public print, than you can learn in two months of school study, for in actual work there is none of the fancied excellencies which govern consideration of school work. There is a sort of academic trick in drawing

¹ Letter to Miss Jessie Dodd, October 6, 1896.

from life that appeals to the teacher and pupils, and from observation in life I find that students are very often given great credit for school work without having in the least a shade of artistic ability. When you are making pictures to be reproduced in print you are then given no favor and your pictures must be good as pictures or else they are of no possible use. . . .” With this idea in mind he began trying out various productions of his pupils on the art editors of Harper & Brothers and other publishing houses. These pictures were oftentimes accepted and many of the pupils began to make almost enough money to support themselves. This system of sending on to the magazines the paintings produced under his supervision rapidly became one of the most important elements of his teaching. He was insistent, however, that none should be used except those pictures which, in the opinions of the art editors, were worthy of being reproduced; that anything should have been accepted simply through his influence would have been revolting to his sense of justice. He wrote to Edward Penfield, who was then art editor for Harpers: “. . . I appreciate entirely the generosity of the Harpers exhibited towards my pupils, their unremitting kindness to myself and their interest in that which interests me. At the same time I do not wish the work of my pupils to be accepted upon the ground of charity, for not only would such a stand become very burdensome to yourself, but it would not allow me upon my part to ascertain what is the relation that my pupils’ work occupies in proportion to that of other illustrative artists. My chief idea is not that my class shall earn money through the kindness of my friends the publishers, but that I shall

be able to know whether my instruction is producing the required results. . . .”

In 1898, with the co-operation of the authorities of the Drexel Institute, Howard Pyle established a summer class at Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. He felt that to a limited number of pupils he could give during the summer months so intensive and so practical a training that it would repay any sacrifice which he might have to make. The Drexel Institute agreed to give scholarships to a certain number of talented pupils; he on his side was to give instruction without receiving any salary. An old mill on the banks of the Brandywine, just across the road from the historic Washington and Lafayette headquarters, was turned into a studio, and the meadows around were used for all sorts of out-door sketching. Here on the site of the battle of the Brandywine, he taught his young protégés, among other things, to draw the Revolutionary soldier, taught them so well that when *Collier's* was about to publish Paul Leicester Ford's *Janice Meredith* he was able to secure for his pupils the illustrating of it. The keynote of the Summer School was work. All day long he kept the young men and women at their easels, inspiring them with the enthusiasm which he had always at his command. Then, oftentimes in the evening, he and Mrs. Pyle would entertain them at the big country house in which they lived during the summers. Every now and then he would give them a day off, and they would all go on a picnic to Valley Forge or some other interesting place in the surrounding country. There was thus a considerable social life, which provided for the young people relaxation from the intense training to which they were subjected. The Summer School was so successful that

it was repeated during the following summer, and would in all probability have become a regular part of the Drexel Institute, had not Howard Pyle resigned from his position there in 1900.

Toward the end of the first Summer School, he wrote Dr. McAlister: "A week from tomorrow our Summer School closes. I think we have produced some very good results, though I am not sure that the high achievement for which I was ambitious has been entirely attained. I dare say I expect too much of my students, but I think it is better to expect too much than too little. Upon the whole, I think next winter we will find that our summer class has produced results which, if they do not eventually fully repay the Drexel Institute in money for its expenditure, will, at least, entirely recompense us in the increased excellence of our students' work. By the end of the summer we will have illustrated five books containing somewhat upwards of fifty drawings; we will have made about a dozen very excellent landscapes and have accomplished four studies of the draped figure, of which three examples each—say, twelve examples in all—may be exhibited this coming fall with credit to the students and to the Drexel Institute. . . ."¹ And again after the school had closed: ". . . I cannot but feel that the generosity of the Drexel Institute to its art students has, in this Summer School, performed a very great work. In our efforts to build up an Art School upon the useful and practical lines that have been laid down for it, nothing, in my opinion, has so far advanced those endeavors as the work of this school during the past season. In two instances a doubtful student has been converted into an artist of very

¹ Letter to Dr. James McAlister, August 24, 1898.

decided promise. And all the students of the class have shown more advance in two months of summer study than they have in a year of ordinary instruction. This, of course, might have been largely due to the fact of the contact of the students with nature and of their free and wholesome life in the open air. Their labors were assiduous and unre-laxing, their recreation being taken only in the evenings. They prepared for work by eight in the morning, and they rarely concluded their labors until five or six in the after-noon. The result of this close application shows I think in our exhibition.

"In this outline of our summer work I make no mention of the brighter and happier coloring which your bounty brought so generously into these young lives. Apart from the great and abundant happiness they enjoyed, they were able also to earn considerable amounts of money from their art work.

"Another season I will volunteer, as I have during the past summer, to give my instruction gratuitously to a sum-mer class."¹

At the close of the second session, he again wrote to Dr. McAlister: ". . . Though the work done by the pupils during the past summer is perhaps not so great in number of examples finished for exhibition purposes, it is yet in many respects of the highest order achieved in our Institute. Each pupil has been working throughout the summer at a single composition made originally by the individual. These have been worked up into finished pictures in more or less full color. I had photographs taken of these examples of work and showed them to my friends Harper & Brothers. These

¹ Letter to Dr. James McAlister, October 12, 1898.

publishers were so pleased with the work that they have expressed a willingness to publish all or nearly all of the drawings made by the Summer School in *Harper's Weekly*, and also others done through the season under the auspices of the Class of Illustration at the Institute. . . . Besides these examples of full work, one of the pupils has made two illustrations for *McClure's Magazine*, and others have illustrated books for Houghton, Mifflin & Company, and Dodd, Mead & Company. This has consumed, of course, a part of the summer, but my chief instruction has been directed to the perfection of our Institute work, and those people who have been delayed in the finishing thereof because of these important books undertaken are remaining here at their own expense to complete the Drexel Institute Class work. . . ."¹

Early in 1900 Howard Pyle began to feel that he was not accomplishing enough at the Drexel Institute to warrant his giving up two days of his time every week. He, accordingly, in the following letter resigned his position, and his resignation was unwillingly accepted: " . . . I find myself impelled herewith to resign my position as Instructor of the Art Department of the Drexel Institute. . . .

"(1) My time is very valuable, and now that I feel myself quite matured in my art knowledges, I think it both unwise and wrong to expend my time in general teaching. (2) The great majority of a class as large as that which I teach at the Drexel Institute is hopelessly lacking in all possibility of artistic attainment. (3) There are only one or two who can really receive the instruction which I give. (4) To im-

¹ Letter to Dr. James McAlister, September 21, 1899.

part this instruction to these two or three who can receive it appears to be unfair to the others who do not receive such particular instruction. (5) This apparent favoritism upon my part must inevitably tend to disrupt the Art School or to make the large majority discontented with the instruction which they receive in contrast with that which the few receive; nor is it possible to assure such discontented pupils that that which I give them is far more abundant and far more practical than that which they could receive from any other Art Institute—the fact remains in their minds that they are not given that which I give to other pupils and that apparently there is favoritism in the Class.

“This position forces upon me two alternatives. The first is not to impart such particular instruction but to confine myself to general teaching; the other is to abandon general instruction for the particular instruction of a few pupils. Of these two alternatives the first I cannot accept, for my time is too valuable, and I will not consent to give merely general instruction without the hope of producing a few worthy and useful students.

“As to the second alternative it is palpable that the Drexel Institute could not afford to maintain so expensive a school as a School of Illustration for the benefit of some four or five pupils. Hence my reason for resigning.

“I cannot close my letter without expressing to you my deep and heartfelt thanks for the kindness and sympathy and the generosity that has always marked the attitude of yourself and the authorities of the Drexel Institute toward me and my pupils. . . . It is also with great pride that I am able to point to the fact that no school in this country—perhaps no school in the world—has pro-



WHO SHALL BE CAPTAIN?
From
THE BUCCANEERS
Harper's Magazine, 1911

duced such great results with such limited material as the Drexel Institute has achieved.”¹

A little before this, January 27, he had written to J. Henry Harper: “. . . It is a great disappointment to me that my teaching at the Drexel Institute has not done more than it has, and I have given the matter no small consideration. The first thing, obviously, to do is to resign my position as teacher of the School of Illustration, for I cannot waste my time in teaching mediocrity. . . . It now remains to turn my acquired knowledge of teaching to some real account. To this end the following plan has suggested itself to me:

“That I build here in Wilmington a studio or set of studios adjoining my own studio; that I gather together in these studios some six or nine pupils, singling them out, not from Philadelphia alone, but from the larger schools in other important cities, such as New York, Boston, and Chicago.

“I propose giving my instruction gratuitously, expecting the students to pay only a small rental to cover the interest upon the money invested in the building. They would, besides, have to pay for their models and for heating the building in winter. Beyond this there would be no expense for instruction, and I think that from seven to ten dollars a month (exclusive of the hire of models) would be all that they would be called upon to pay.

“In the meantime I would endeavor to throw in their way all the illustration of the best class that I could obtain, thus endeavoring to instruct them first of all to make their art useful before turning it in the direction of color work. I also think that by doing such illustrative work they would

¹ Letter to Dr. James McAlister, February 14, 1900.

not only be able to pay their expenses of studio rent but even to provide their living expenses as well. . . .”

By March 17, his plans were well developed. On that day he wrote to Edward Penfield: “. . . My final aim in teaching will not be essentially the production of illustrators of books, but rather the production of painters of pictures. For I believe that the painters of true American Art are yet to be produced. Such men as Winslow Homer and Fuller in figure painting, and a group of landscape painters headed by George Inness as yet are almost the only occupants of the field. To this end I regard magazine and book illustration as a ground from which to produce painters. . . .

“My plan of teaching, as it grows in my mind, is somewhat as follows: the students who come to me will be supposed to have studied drawing and painting as taught in the schools. My first object shall be to teach them to paint the draped and costumed model so that it shall possess the essentials of a practical picture. To teach this requires considerable knowledge not usually possessed by the artist-teachers in the schools, and this knowledge I feel myself competent to impart. I believe I am not devoid of a sense of color and I trust I will be able so to instruct the pupil as to preserve whatever color talent he may possess.

“My experience is that within a year of such teaching the pupil will be sufficiently grounded in a practical knowledge of painting to be able to embark upon illustrative work.

“I shall make it a requisite that the pupils whom I choose

shall possess, first of all, imagination; secondly, artistic ability; thirdly, color and drawing; and I shall probably not accept any who are deficient in any one of these three requisites. It is needless for me to say that my opinions as to the requisites of color and form may not be the same as those entertained by the art schools. . . .

"My instruction . . . would embrace not only daily criticism of the work done in the class, but also instruction in composition, Facial and Figure Construction, Anatomy, Perspective, and Proportion. I shall give lectures perhaps twice a week in the evenings. . . ."

The school was accordingly founded. Nearly all of the first members were from the old class at the Drexel Institute, but gradually, as people heard of the new idea that was being worked out in Wilmington, there began to be applications for admission from all over the United States. In 1903, there were between two and three hundred such applications, but only three of the aspirants were admitted. Howard Pyle used the utmost discrimination in making his choices. Among the young men and women who attended the school were Stanley Arthurs, Frank Schoonover, N. C. Wyeth, Harvey Dunn, Thornton Oakley, Ida Daugherty, W. J. Aylward, and George Harding, each of whom has since done commendable work in the field of art.

In 1904, Howard Pyle again began to feel that he ought to be passing on the fruits of his knowledge to a greater body of young people than it was possible for him to have around him in Wilmington. He explains what he wanted to do in the following letter to J. H. Chapin, the art editor of *Scribner's Monthly*:

"I want to write to you about a matter that has occupied my mind during the past several months.

"The year that has passed has convinced me that I really am of use to the younger artists through the advice and criticism which I give them, for it has been my happy lot to establish several young lives, and I think it likely that some of my pupils will reach unusual distinction in their profession. I am speaking very intimately to you when I say that I feel that this is due, in some measure, to my instruction—I am sure that the ideals with which I have inspired them are both broad and large. It has occurred to me that I might broaden my work by extending it to New York, and I want to ask you as a special favor, to tell me very frankly what you think of such an idea.

"In general, my thought is, that I should come on every two weeks upon Saturday, and should deliver lectures upon composition as I do here in Wilmington, and that I should take the opportunity of criticizing and of advising with young artists concerning their pictures. It occurred to me that I might give an hour to such criticism and an hour to a composition lecture—the one, say from four to five, and the other from five to six. I should like to make such lectures free to all who would care to attend, and to give my services without charge, though I think that such a class should pay my traveling expenses, which would amount to not more than fifteen dollars for each trip from here to New York.

"If such a plan is worth while, and if it could be put into operation, I would like it to be conducted under the auspices of the Art Students' League. I wish you would consider this matter, and give me your mature thoughts upon it.

There is splendid material in New York, and it would be a great happiness to me if I could feel that my quarter of a century of experience and knowledge could be of any benefit to American Art—both illustrative and otherwise.”¹

Chapin was at once enthusiastic about the plan, and through his influence the interest of the Art League was speedily aroused. Thus the lectures began almost immediately. Although the authorities at the League, during the winter that the lectures were continued, felt that Howard Pyle was doing an inestimable service to the young artists, he himself never considered his work there a success. He was never able to give the individual attention to each pupil that was so necessary an adjunct to his method of teaching.

He wrote to Chapin on May 8, 1905: “. . . I am about closing my series of lectures before the young artists at the Art Students’ League, and I think you will be interested to know that the effort has not been a success—indeed, I think it has been a decided failure. . . .

“I think that my advice and criticism is not felt to be so useful as I had hoped it might be. This is a great regret to me, because I feel so sure that many of the knowledges which I have acquired in the nearly thirty years of my work would be of a very great deal of use to those who are only beginning. But it is quite in line with the old adage that a man may be very willing to pump, but he cannot make the animals drink.

“I feel that it is very possible for the illustrative work of the magazine to be carried to a much higher plane of solidity than it has yet attained to; for at present it gives the impression, at least to me, of being thin, ephemeral, and

¹ Letter to J. H. Chapin, October 4, 1904.

superficial. My own work is perhaps heavy, and lacking in brilliancy, but I do not see why it is not quite possible to have both brilliancy and solidity. Just now the world demands brilliancy and originality; but you know how fashions change, and when the demand—which seems to me to be very near—shall be made for something more solid, I do not see where it is to come from. The Gibson-Hutt school of illustration is bound to have its day and to pass, and when it is gone, I do not see that there will be anything at all left behind that will be worth keeping. There are very strong young talents in the world of illustration, and I am only sorry that my little dip into the young art life of New York should not have inspired the wish upon their part to take advantage of my experience.

“I know all this sounds very egotistical and self-assured but I believe I am quite losing sight of my own self in the matter—at least, I am writing very frankly to you. After all, whatever is, is right, and it is doubtless better that the young art should learn its own truths instead of having them interjected by another man. I have offered my services to the cause, but I shall not repine that those to whom they were offered desired to obtain their knowledge in another way.”

During all these years of strenuous activity both in creative work and in instruction, he had been developing theories of what American Art should be, and by what methods it would be possible to produce it. The following extracts from a few of his letters will give his ideas in some detail, particularly as to the inadequacy of the American Art Schools.

To W. M. R. French of the Chicago Art Institute.

“September 28, 1903.

“ . . . I believe I wrote you that I was invited by Yale University to deliver their annual address to the Art School last June. The subject which I chose was entitled ‘The Art of the Age,’ and I endeavored in this to explain my understanding of the difference between the Art of the past and the Art that is demanded by the present age. I somehow felt that my ideas were not altogether pleasing to the University people, for they were very radical and I stated very clearly and concisely my opinion that our age and our times require an art that, if not distinctly different from the Art of the past, is, at least, an adaptation and completion of the art of the past to fit our present needs. . . . ”

To W. M. R. French.

“April 10, 1905.

“ . . . I am very much interested in art education, and my ideas upon that subject are an evolution of ten years, in which I have not followed academic instruction and in which I have endeavored to alter and amend my art instruction so as to fit it to the needs of the young American artist as I have known him.

“My opinion is that art education in this country does not fit the needs of the case, and my connection with art education in New York during the past year confirms me still more strongly in my views. Nor do I believe that art education abroad affords a solution of the question of technical training to the young artist. I think that the young artist is overshadowed by the technical accumulation of foreign

education, which, excellent as it is, does not lend itself to the fulfillment of a characteristic American Art.

"Such an art is not one that can be built up in a few years; it must, to my mind, be a growth in which the technique of picture-making adapts itself to the needs of the case, and I do not believe that the accumulation of a marvellous technical facility which our American artists acquire abroad tends to a corresponding increase either of originality or imagination. I rather think it tends to subordinating originality and imagination to technical methods of painting. . . . "

To W. M. R. French.

"April 13, 1905.

" . . . It may be well for me to state that in general my opinion is that pictures are creations of the imagination and not of technical facility, and that that which art students most need is the cultivation of their imagination and its direction into practical and useful channels of creation—and I hold that this is exactly in line with all other kinds of professional education, whether of law, finance, medicine, or physics. I would not belittle the necessity of accurate technical training. I insist upon that in my own school even more strenuously than it is insisted upon in the great art schools of the country; but I subordinate that technical training entirely to the training of the imagination. . . . "

To Dr. James H. Canfield of Columbia University.

"April 17, 1905.

" . . . This winter I have been lecturing in New York, as you know, every two weeks, and have thus come some-

what in contact with the art schools of the Metropolis. I cannot very well make you understand my regret and sorrow at finding them so poor and so inadequate to fill the demands of a progressive art. I doubt if there is a single really excellent art school now available in New York. There is not a New York School comparable either in energy or equipment to the schools of Philadelphia, of Chicago, or even of Brooklyn. . . .

"As conditions now exist, each art school endeavors to hold its pupils by giving them a quick and easy training instead of a training that shall be thorough and exact. Cleverness seems to be substituted for exactitude, and the result is very unsatisfactory so far as any real and practical results are concerned.

"It is very discouraging to one who holds in view a real, material, and vital advancement in the practical uses of art to meet so many young artists, who, having passed from the schools, seek in vain for opportunities whereby they may earn a modest living. . . .

"I would not have you think I am pessimistic, nor would I have you think that I want to set myself up in needless and carping criticism of my brother artists' work or of the methods whereby they have been taught. I merely mean to present my views quite frankly and in confidence. I stand for results, and, so far, our American system of art has not produced adequate results. . . ."

To W. M. R. French.

"April 20, 1905.

" . . . I think in many parts of the country the art world is beginning to appreciate that my instruction is not

given with the object of teaching young artists to make book illustrations. I am aware that my own work has been very largely identified with that art—first, because I am very fond of that particular channel of work; secondly, because I think that a wider impression can be made upon the world of American Art through book illustrations than through any other medium; and thirdly, because book and magazine illustrations are very remunerative, and in the peculiar circumstances of my life I have been obliged to consider that phase of the subject. My purposes, however, have, I believe, a much wider scope than that, for it seems to me that the great art of the world is constructed upon a line almost identical with that of book and magazine illustration, more especially now that the color processes are becoming more and more perfect. For if we substitute a small flat decorated space for a very large flat decorated space there is not such a vast difference between the best book illustration and a mural painting.

“My objective, however, in teaching my pupils is that they should be fitted for any kind of art, whether of easel painting or even the minor uses of portrait painting. But I deem it advisable that they should put it to the test what their degree of excellence really is, not by the method of school competition, but by the broader and larger means of a public decision in the pages of a magazine. This is a very much larger jury, I hold, than a jury of teachers in an art school and the result has been that my pupils soon find their level—that some of them linger in the paths of illustrative work because they like it, and that others drift into other channels of work because they prefer those.

“Among my older pupils, for instance, are Miss Violet

Oakley, whose trend is entirely in the direction of mural work and glass; Mr. F. E. Schoonover, who, while his work is only just beginning to make an impression, has already received a commission to paint a picture of his own choice of subject which involves a remuneration to the amount of \$1,000; and Miss Ida Daugherty, who is devoting herself almost entirely to stained glass, in which she promises to make a marked and major success provided she cares to continue in that work."

To W. M. R. French.

"June 22, 1905.

" . . . It is quite true that I do think that our present system of art education is not adequate to our requirements, and it is true that I find it a practical fact and not a theory that the education given by the academies to the young artists who come to me for instruction has to be unlearned before I can impart the facts that are necessary to make their art of practical use in the world.

"I am very clear in my own mind as to the reason for this, and I do not think they are at all involved or obscure. Let me explain: I think you may easily see that in the making of a successful picture, the artist must compose and arrange his figures and effects altogether from his imagination, and that there is very little opportunity in the making of such a picture for him to copy exactly the position of a model placed before him in the lights and shadows which the studios afford. Nor is it likely that he can find any background to copy accurately and exactly into such an imaginative picture.

"For example: suppose an artist were called upon to

paint a picture of a man running away from his enemies along the shores of a sea, with a gray sky overhead, and a strong wind blowing over the landscape. You see, he could not pose a model in the required position, for not only could no model hold such a position as that of a man running, with a center of gravity projected far beyond the point of impact; but even if the model were suspended in the air in such a position, yet he would not convey the idea of running. Apart from this it would be very difficult to find exactly the seascape to fit the picture, and exactly the landscape. For all this, the man must draw, not upon the facts of nature, but upon his imagination.

"If I have expressed myself at all clearly, you will see that what a man needs to paint an imaginative picture of such a sort, is not the power of imitation, but the knowledge to draw a figure from imagination. . . . "

To W. M. R. French.

"July 17, 1905.

" . . . For after all, a man is not an artist by virtue of clever technique or brilliant methods: he is fundamentally an artist in the degree that he is able to sense and appreciate the significance of life that surrounds him, and to express that significance to the minds of others.

"No man can impart that divine gift to another, but he may encourage its growth instead of stifling it by a hard incrustation of academic methods.

"I wish with all my soul that our American art schools would awake to this vital fact, and not say, as is sometimes said, that 'such a method of teaching is all very well for illustrating, but it does not apply to painting.' I marvel that

our American art schools remain blinded to the fact that no great picture of the past has ever come down to us that has not remained alive because it is the expression of an ideal, and not merely the skillful rendering of a fact. . . . ”

From the foregoing accounts and letters one can see what a vast amount of thought and energy Howard Pyle gave to the subject of instruction; one can perceive something of his ardent desire to lend his influence to the advancement of an American Art; but one cannot possibly conceive of the sincere devotion which inspired all his teaching. Only his pupils could know that, they who saw year after year the unflagging kindness and interest which was continuously showered upon them. It is a pleasing reflection upon human nature that their gratitude has been so uniformly copious.

CHAPTER XI

MURAL DECORATION

*T*OWARD the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth there was in America a vast increase in popular interest in mural paintings. The architects of public buildings were insisting upon the importance of decoration, and were everywhere planning wall spaces that required the work of the rising mural painters. Vedder, Abbey, Blashfield, Cox and many others were doing excellent things; mural decoration was assuming larger proportions than it ever had before in this country. Under conditions such as these it was inevitable that Howard Pyle should turn his attention to this branch of art. For many years he had desired, if ever the opportunity should present itself, to paint some large mural decoration, in which he could create a lasting evidence of the historical knowledge which he had acquired from so many years of illustrative work.

Some of his friends in Boston were very anxious that he should paint an historical picture in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and did everything in their power to make it possible. In the end, however, the scheme failed. When it was fairly evident that nothing would come of it, he wrote thus to his friend, Winthrop Scudder of Cambridge, who had been one of those most active in trying to get the commission for him: “. . . I did not

count very much upon it, but still as it was an opportunity that afforded the opening of a very small crack of chance, I did not think it well to allow it to pass by without developing it to the fullest. I do not count very much upon the matter. I have very good art friends in Boston, but upon the whole I do not feel that the Boston people are in sympathy with the Art which I represent. Your Museum, for instance, debars from its walls all pictures that are of an historic nature, limiting itself to such others as appear to me to represent that which is purely technical or that which is simply ornate. To my mind the tendency of Modern Art is of another sort. It seems to me that Art through the past has tended to develop into that which is more widely humane than simple decorative art can represent, and it is toward this end that my work has been directed.

“I do not feel that your people agree with me in this, nor do I think that the art opinion throughout the country entirely agrees with me. There are many who coincide with such an opinion but they are still in the minority, and I think the large majority in Boston are opposed to such a view. In this of course they may be right and I may be wrong—it is entirely a matter of opinion, but, at the same time, as I have my opinion I must stand with it and fall with it, and in this case I do not think that there is the slightest possibility of the art authorities of Massachusetts desiring my work in their House of Representatives.

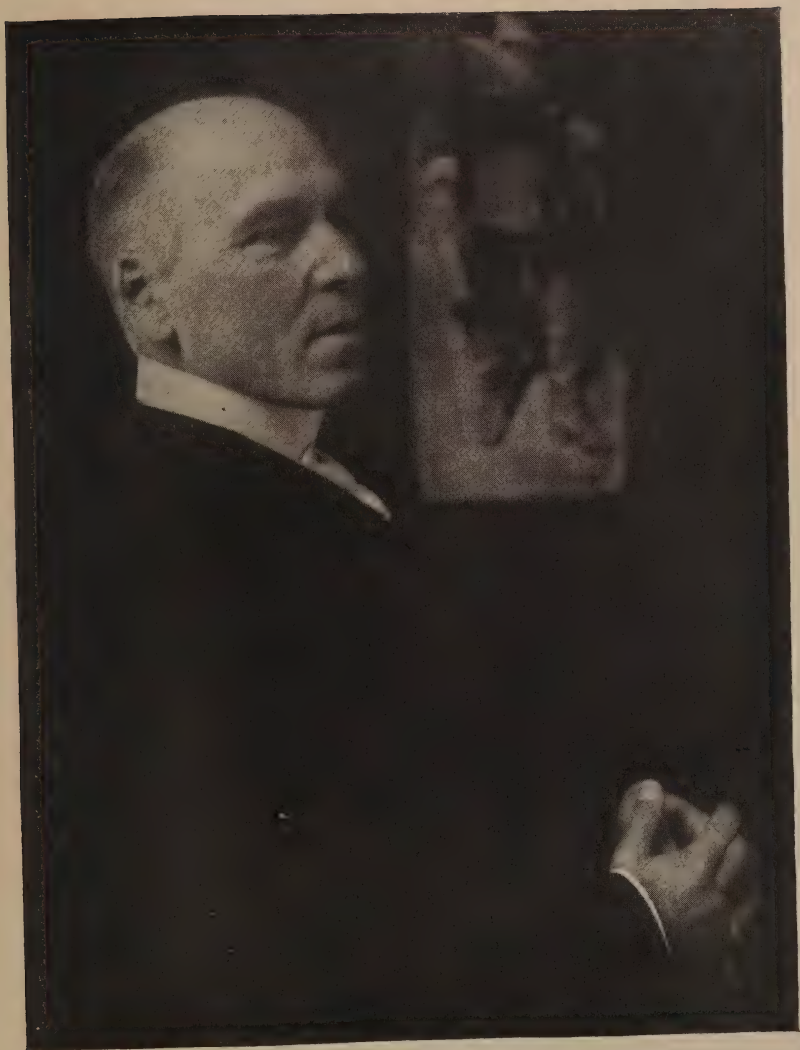
“As Governor Walcott writes, the space upon the walls of the House of Representatives is proposed to be filled by a decorative or allegorical subject and not by historical subjects. I think I could paint a Battle of Bunker Hill; I think

I could paint a picture of the smoke, the thunder, the roar of the battle, the bareheaded, wounded, and shattered columns of British advancing, the trampled grass, the smoke of the burning houses, and over beyond all the quaint town reposing silently and peacefully in the afternoon sunlight. The image is very clear in my own mind, and if I could materialize it upon canvas I think I might be able to show the sunlight, the heat and the desperate human earnestness of the grim red-coated heroes marching up that hill to their death.

“I doubt whether I could paint ‘Massachusetts Crowned with Plenty,’ or ‘Massachusetts Standing a Bulwark for Freedom against Tyranny.’ I do not know whether I could paint a decorative subject in tones of blue and silver or blue and gray, but I am very sure I should not venture to make the attempt. Whether or not the one subject is Art and the other subject is not Art seems to me to be a question that is almost parochial in its limitations, but if the good people of Massachusetts prefer the one to the other and if they choose to say that that which illuminates their walls shall be of the one sort and shall further say that the other sort is not truly Art, I must be prepared to submit to their dictum in so far as their walls are concerned.

“I write thus to you in full because I very much question whether it would be worth your while to trouble yourself any further in the matter. I think I may say that I am as well qualified to paint such a picture as any man in the United States, but that is altogether apart from the question.

“When a man is as old as I he must stand or fall by his opinions, and I do not think there is a foothold for me in



Howard Syle

Massachusetts. If this is so it would be more than all our enthusiasms and strength and limitless friendship could do to prop up my cause to make it stand. . . . ”¹

In spite of this failure in Boston, however, Howard Pyle did not give up the idea of some day doing mural painting. In order to gain some practical knowledge of the art, he began a series of wall decorations for a room in his house at Wilmington. These were not completed until 1905, when one of them was exhibited at the Society of Architects with considerable success. In the same year came the golden opportunity. Cass Gilbert, the architect for the Minnesota State Capitol, gave him the commission for a large picture of “The Battle of Nashville” to be placed in the Governor’s Reception Room. It was just the sort of painting that he was supremely fitted to do, and when completed it was a magnificent triumph. A year after it had been put in position, Cass Gilbert wrote him: “. . . I have just this morning returned from St. Paul, where I have had a chance to see your superb picture of ‘The Battle of Nashville.’ I want again to congratulate you with all my heart upon your distinguished success in this picture. I am very proud to have it in the building. It is a great work of Art. . . . ”

Then, in 1907, he painted for another building of Cass Gilbert’s, the Essex County Court House in Newark, New Jersey, “The Landing of Carteret,” which is thought by many to be the best example of his work in this style. In a letter to W. Walton, July 28, 1906, he gives a complete account of all the mural work which he had done up to this time, including “The Landing of Carteret,” on which he was then at work:

¹ To Winthrop Scudder, December 26, 1898.

" . . . As my mural work has only just begun within the past year or so, and as I only worked at it in the intervals of my other occupations, the list of my work is distinguished chiefly on account of its brevity.

"I suppose the most important of the two examples that have been finished within the past year is a set of painted panels which decorate my own house.¹

"This decoration consists of a series of seven panels: four of them figure panels, and three of them landscapes. Of the four figure panels, two are quite large (8 by 10) and two are smaller (8 by 3). These four represent 'The Genus of Art,' 'The Genus of Literature,' 'The Genus of Music,' and 'The Genus of Drama.' The two larger panels are quite elaborate groups of figures.

"'The Genus of Art' was exhibited (unfinished) in the Society of Architects, in 1905, and appeared to attract a good deal of attention; at least, it was given a very distinguished place in the Exhibition, and I heard quite a great deal of comment upon it.

"In this panel, The Genus of Art, clad in semi-transparent golden draperies, is leading a procession of figures who are following admiringly after her. The picture is quite filled with blossoms, and two peacocks, gaudy with iridescent color, march with the leading figure.

"The second panel—'The Genus of Literature'—represents a dark-clad figure crowned with bay leaves, and standing against a wide, open sky with a strip of ocean in the distance. She is chanting to the accompaniment of a golden lyre which she plays, and a group of figures at the

¹ These paintings have now passed into the possession of the Wilmington Society of the Fine Arts, and are on view in the gallery of the Wilmington Public Library.

other end of the panel sit or stand listening to her. This composition is arranged with a certain severity of form, excepting that the fruit trees, which in the first picture bear blossoms, in this are filled with fruit.

"One of the smaller panels, depicting 'The Genus of Drama,' represents a smiling and rather jocund figure crowned with roses. She is standing, leaning against a rather thin tree, and holds in her hand a tragic mask. Behind her is the sea, and around her a considerable space of sky.

"The other smaller panel, 'The Genus of Music,' presents a dancing figure clad in thin, rosy draperies, playing a dual pipe. The flowering blossoms from the first panel ('The Genus of Art') extend across through a second entirely floral panel, and reach into and embrace this rosy-clad dancing figure.

"At the end of the room are two landscape panels, in which the blossoms on one side melt into the severer forms of the other, and tie the two ideas together.

"The seventh panel is a smaller mantel piece depicting the sky shining through a cluster of blossoms.

"This work has been distinctly a work of love, and has occupied my leisure for some time past. I have been painting upon it now and then for a year or more when I could snatch an hour or half a day from my other work.

"The other mural work which I have just finished, or rather am just finishing, is of an entirely different type from this. It is a panel six by eight feet and is not so much a decoration as it is a wall painting. It represents the Battle of Nashville, and is intended to hang in the Governor's Room in the Capitol at St. Paul.

"Fortunately the subject lent itself to very picturesque

treatment. It depicts the charge of the Minnesota regiments at the closing of General Thomas' great battle (The Battle of Nashville). This charge occurred at the close of a rainy day in winter, following a thaw of frigid weather. The regiment charged across a very muddy cornfield, in which the water had gathered in puddles, so that the racing men are caked with mud. The Confederates had built an entrenchment behind a stone wall (represented as running diagonally across the picture) and the moment chosen for the composition is the instant when the charging crowd of men is pouring like a wave over the wall. In the distance of the picture is a height known as Shy's Hill, on which a battery had been planted, and upon which the smoke is booming out from the firing guns. The canopy of smoke is just lifting from the battle, showing the last desperate stand of the few Confederates in the trench, whilst behind these few a hurry of men is seen retreating through the vapors of gunpowder smoke.

"Besides these two pictures, I have now already in hand another mural painting, (6 by 18) representing The Landing of Carteret, and intended for the Board of Freeholders' Room in the New Essex County Court House. This picture is still different from the others, discussed above. It represents a hot July day, over which a rain storm has just passed. The scene is laid at the edge of a brimming marsh land (such as I conceive the shores of Newark Bay to have been at that time). In the center of the picture is gathered quite a group of figures (the captain of the vessel, the secretary of the newly appointed Governor, the crown officer, reading Carteret's credentials). The central figure of Carteret is clad entirely in red, and catches the eye as the most promi-

nent object. At the left-hand end of the picture is a group of humble settlers, listening to the reading of the credentials. At the right of the picture (into which reaches a long board landing stage or wharf) is a group of newly arrived immigrants, who are waiting respectfully while the credentials are read. Back of these figures are two other crowds of immigrants, and are all uncovered excepting Carteret, who wears his slouch and feather hat. These figures are standing in the passage of a cloud shadow. The air is filled with a golden-yellow light, and the sun in the distance bursts forth upon the ship (*The Philip*) riding at anchor in the bay. A group of immigrants from the ship is just landing at the extremity of the landing stage, bearing with them great bundles of clothing and other belongings. . . . ”

A letter to Howland D. Perrine gives an interesting idea of the research necessary for such a picture as “The Landing of Carteret”:

“ . . . The facts of the landing of Carteret are of the meagerest possible sort, and in consequence I was obliged to paint my picture largely from surmise and analogy. For instance, I felt that it would be reasonable to suppose that Carteret would not simply land from his ship, *The Philip*, without taking some form of official possession of the new province; so that while there is no account of what that official ceremony was, I felt tolerably sure that it would consist in reading aloud the royal grant to the proprietor, and the authority of the proprietor appointing Sir Philip Carteret as his representative and governor. I judged this

because in the few scraps of authentic narrative that have reached us, it says that the new governor had his secretary with him. The secretary would be likely to present such credentials. Consequently, I deemed it to be reasonable to suppose that the various steps of taking possession would be about as follows: first, that the ship would sail up into the bay to some convenient point of anchorage whence the immigrants and their belongings could be put ashore. This would be done, doubtless, at some such pier or landing stage as I have attempted to depict in my picture. As soon as the ship came to anchor, debarkation would immediately begin, and doubtless several immigrants with their belongings would be sent ashore.

"Second, the Governor would not be willing for these immigrants to land until he had entered formally into his Governorship, and probably he would send a couple of musketeers to the wharf to see that these people did not quit the wharf landing until he himself had first set foot upon his new province.

"Third, word would undoubtedly have been sent to the original settlers commanding them to meet the Governor at his point of landing, so that there would doubtless be quite a little party of them gathered at the spot of debarkation.

"Fourth, it would undoubtedly be the case that the Governor would land with some official pomp. He would probably bring with him his secretary, the Captain of the ship, and perhaps some gentleman adventurer who would accompany him. It was quite necessary in those days for a public officer to have his trumpeter, who acted as a sort of herald-messenger. Anthony van Corlear stood in such a capacity to Governor Stuyvesant, and there are numerous

contemporary prints that represent such a trumpeter delivering a message to his master from someone with whom he would communicate. Consequently, I deemed it reasonable to suppose that such a trumpeter would first come before the company, that he would announce the title of the Governor and his degree, that the Governor would then come forward, and that the Secretary would immediately read his credentials to the assembled settlers.

"All this seems to me to be a very reasonable conjecture, but there is unfortunately no absolute authority bearing it out. There is a tradition that Carteret marched to the site of Elizabethtown with a hoe over his shoulder, and that he there struck the hoe into the earth and so began the foundation of that settlement. This story is very apocryphal, so much so that I feared to represent it. It is likely that the event really did happen, but it is almost absolutely certain that it was not performed in any bucolic manner, but that it was some formality that the Governor performed which, like the laying of a corner stone, was intended to typify the foundation of the enterprise.

"So far as portraiture is concerned, it was, of course, quite impossible for me to find any authentic likeness. I failed even to discover any presentation of Carteret himself. I suppose you know that there are very few authentic portraits of the earlier colonial governors. Even of those which we acknowledge, fully half of them are of questionable authenticity. . . ."¹

The next essay in the field of mural decoration was a group of pictures for the Hudson County Court House at Jersey City. Frank Millet, who was later so tragically lost

¹Letter to Howland D. Perrine, February 26, 1907.

in the *Titanic* disaster at the very height of his powers, was in charge of the decoration of the various rooms, and had immediately selected Howard Pyle to do five pictures of an historical nature, illustrating the discovery of the Hudson River and the early settling of its banks. These pictures are remarkable for their coloring, perhaps the best that is exhibited in any of his mural paintings. He was assisted in the finishing of these pictures by Stanley Arthurs and Frank Schoonover.

In 1910 he came to the conclusion that for the remainder of his life he would devote himself entirely to mural decoration, and with that in view he went to Italy, that he might there be able to study the old masters, especially their coloring. This was a brave decision, for he had long been opposed to any foreign influence, and had vigorously opposed all European innovations in American Art. Now he began to feel that if he were to go on with his career of wall decoration, it was imperative that he should know much more thoroughly the pictures of the Italian masters.

He was not destined, however, to reap the benefits of his studies in Italy. He was not well when he left America, and after a lingering illness he died at Florence in November of the next year. With his death, American Art lost a great figure who would, had he been able to carry out the new impulses which Italy gave him, doubtless have left mural paintings far superior to any of those by which we know him.

CHAPTER XII

ITALY AND THE END

*A*LLUSION was made in the preceding chapter to the Italian journey and Howard Pyle's purposes in undertaking it. After many years, spent almost entirely in writing and illustrating, opportunities for extensive mural work seemed to be unfolding, and he felt that in order to prosecute them with greater sureness and more abundant knowledge the European, particularly the Italian, background was desirable. Before this time he had refrained from going to Europe because he was afraid that he might lose something of the American spirit, which he thought so necessary an adjunct both to his creative work and to his teaching. He made arrangements with his publishers that sufficient material for illustration should be sent to him from time to time that he might not get out of touch with market conditions as they existed in America. Then on November 22, 1910, he sailed from New York accompanied by his family and Miss Gertrude Brinckle, his secretary.

Just at this time he began to be afflicted with exceedingly bad health, which was at least partially due to too sedulous a preoccupation with his work. When one considers the vast number of things which he had accomplished between 1876 and 1910, one can only wonder how any human frame could bear up under such uninterrupted exertion. Literally thousands of illustrations, against almost none of which

could carelessness be urged by the most exacting critic; nineteen books, and many uncollected short stories; fourteen mural paintings, not to mention a number of book plates and several excellent easel-paintings; all these were the productions of something less than thirty-four years, during which time he read voluminously, and devoted himself passionately to his family. His whole life was a record of industry which can be matched but rarely in the annals of American art and letters. But in 1910 the strain began to tell. He was ill when he reached Italy, and at no time during his year's residence there did he regain the robust health which he had always enjoyed up to that time. His spirit was depressed; he was incapable of the enthusiasm which had been one of the outstanding characteristics of his nature. Suffering as he was, he could see Italy only through the veil of his own illness. It is, therefore, not surprising that he was not so overwhelmingly impressed with the ancient country as one would expect an artist of his temperament, keenly alive to the beauty of the past, to be. It is, on the whole, a great tribute to his appreciation that in northern Italy he found so many things which could move him to admiration.

Extracts from some of the letters to various of his Wilmington pupils will give in sufficient detail the tenor of his life in Italy:

To Stanley Arthurs from Florence.

“December 16, 1910.

“. . . I have been knocked up with a bilious attack or a stomach attack or something of the kind, and have had a

two weeks' siege of it which has prevented my doing any work—or my doing anything.

“. . . It (Florence) seems to be a wonderful place, and very interesting, but it is dirty and ramshackle compared to our American ideals. In fact, Italy, especially the southern part, impresses me as a great big charnel house, full of the dead and chiefly of the dead bones of the past; and while northern Italy, and especially Florence, is much more prosperous, still the charnel house idea remains with me, and I think I shall use it in an article.

“As for Rome, I hate it. I was in my room all the time but twice, and when I went out then I saw the Roman ruins, and not Saint Peter's and the great pictures and statues. The 'Moses' was the only thing I saw. As for the Roman ruins, they are without shape, weatherworn, and channeled by the rivulets of centuries of rain. They are black in some places and white in others, and are, I think, ugly and disagreeable. I saw nothing beautiful in them, but only the weatherworn remnants of a past and forgotten age.

“In contrast to this I like Florence very much, and am sure that I shall like it better as time goes on. I want to get to the Garden of the Medicis and the place where Lorenzo de Medici breathed his last. I am almost sure that will be very beautiful, and I am going to make my first article upon it. . . .”

To Stanley Arthurs.

“December 21, 1910.

“. . . I like Florence very much, but have not yet seen it under the best auspices. We are just now in a pension or boarding-house, and I am not very fond of boarding-house life—in fact, my long domestic life has unfitted me for it.

I get along pretty well excepting at meal times and in the evening. At meals we form a part of a long *table d'hôte* of uninteresting people, and though they are now more interesting than they were at first, they are not yet thrillingly so. In the evenings we have a very uncomfortable sitting room where the family gathers and where Mrs. Pyle reads to us. But we have found now a furnished apartment which I think will be very nice. . . .

" . . . I wished a great many times that I had you boys here to enjoy this with me. I wish also that my strength would come back to me, for I am as yet quite weak—too weak to work—for I had a very sharp and intense illness while it lasted, and it seems to have cut away nearly all of my virility and strength. I am much better, however, and expect each week to find a studio and do at least some work. . . .

" . . . I think, however, that both you and Frank ought to come over here to Italy. It will be a great lesson to you in the way of color, composition, etc., for the old masters certainly were glorious painters and I take back all that I ever said against them. . . ."

" . . . I do not think Italy is what it is cracked up to be. There are plenty of old buildings in a wonderful state of preservation, but the place itself seems run down, dilapidated and dirty. There are some exceptions to this. Among these is the Uffizi and Pitti collection of the paintings of the Old Masters.

To Ethel Pennewill Brown.

"December 27, 1910.

"You know I did not think much of the Old Masters, seeing them in black and white, but in color they are so re-

markable that I do not see how any human being painted as they did. You stand among them and you feel that you are surrounded by a glow of soft warm ardent colors in which the yellows and the browns are the predominant tone and the wonderful blues and crimsons are the relieving note. Two pictures of Botticelli I saw yesterday are the most remarkable pieces of color work that I have ever seen in my life. One of them in particular, a rich, dark gray with a crimson tone is so remarkable a piece of color that I do not think of anything to parallel it. All the time I was there, I kept thinking of my pupils and wishing that they could see these pictures. It would be such a great and splendid lesson to them for all their future color work.

“ . . . The architecture I do not think very much of. The churches are all of variegated marble, mosaiced in odd forms, so that you lose the very semblance and the purity of the architectural design—if there is any such design. The palaces all look like prisons. The courts inside seem to be very fine (carved pillars, and so on) but on the whole they are a disappointment to me. The plain houses and streets, however, are very interesting—very winding and intricate, with an occasional arch overhead, connecting one house with another, and a great turmoil and bustle in the street below.

“I think on the whole I am getting to like Florence better and better the longer I stay here, but it will never take the place of America. We, in our new country, look to the future; these people look to the past, and are satisfied with it. We experiment in color, and in so experimenting, get all sorts of oddities and peculiarities—they are satisfied with what men did three or four centuries ago. With us everything is clean and pure and well kept, in Italy they are

dirty, unkempt, and while they are not ramshackle, they do not keep the outsides of their houses in neat and perfect repair. . . .”

To Stanley Arthurs and Frank Schoonover.

“January 1, 1911.

“. . . We are getting more and more settled here in Florence. We have left the pension, and have taken an apartment at 6 Via Garibaldi, which I trust will be our address for the next year and a half to come. The rooms are very comfortable, and at one time were occupied by Lord Byron when he was here in Florence. We are in the third story of the house, which is not nearly so fashionable as the second, but it suits us admirably.

“. . . I have only to say in closing that I think I have entirely recovered from my sickness, and I feel better and stronger than I have ever felt; but only blue because I have not yet got a studio, and because I think it will be so expensive to get one. . . .”

To Stanley Arthurs.

“January 11, 1911.

“. . . The old buildings, especially the churches, are exceedingly dirty places outside, but inside there are great treasures; and as for the galleries, they are exceedingly beautiful with their miles of priceless pictures. Some of these pictures, especially the Raphaels, have been retouched, but in the main they are as originally painted. This is especially true of the Botticellis, which are exceedingly fine. I hope these pictures will influence me without influencing me too greatly.

“. . . I *wish* I had some work to do other than illustra-

tion so as to try to live up to what I have learned. Of course, I have to earn my living, but it is rather hard to be limited to illustration. . . .”

To Ethel Pennewill Brown.

“February 15, 1911.

“. . . Already the spring is beginning to approach—one feels it in the air. It is not like the spring of America, when the south wind comes up from the Caribbean Islands, and makes you think of foreign parts; but it is just a balmy glow that seems to cover and embrace everything. . . .”

To Stanley Arthurs.

“April 24, 1911.

“. . . We do not know in America how beautiful fifty generations of culture will make a country. You have to see the surroundings of Florence in springtime for that. The quaint sights of the peasantry doing their work—the men ploughing with a single-handed plough; and once we saw a man and a woman dragging a plough, while another man directed it. Of course the soil is very light and generous, or they could not do it. It is all exceedingly beautiful, and all that I want now is plenty of work to keep me busy. . . .”

To Stanley Arthurs from San Domenico.

“August 5, 1911.

“. . . I suppose you saw that Abbey died after an operation in London. It came as a great shock of surprise, for I had not even known that he was sick. I wish I could get some further particulars of it.

“. . . Since writing to you I have been ill with renal

colic but I am now entirely recovered. This trouble is very painful while it lasts, but it does not seem to leave any lingering consequences. This attack came to me from a long and tiresome journey to Genoa and return."

To Ethel Pennewill Brown.

"August 10, 1911.

" . . . I am much obliged to you for your expression of sympathy for my late sickness. It was very painful, but not really serious, and was the result of a long and tedious journey to Genoa to meet my son Howard. It is curious how different one's anticipation and realization are. I had been looking forward to going to Genoa with Mrs. Pyle, but it was hot, wearisome, and exhausting. My first attack of renal colic was there. My return to Florence induced another and more severe spell, but I am now entirely recovered from it, and am getting quite back into my old tone again. I thought at first I would not be able to do so, but I am now well and strong and growing stronger every day. I would not like to be really sick here in Italy away from my home belongings, and I will now exercise a little more care and then I will come home well and strong.

"The weather in Florence this summer has been exceedingly hot and very dry. We have not had really any rain for upwards of six weeks, but I believe they are accustomed to this dry weather here in Italy during the summer. The trees seem to keep their leaves and are dry and bosky. There are patches of brown in the grass, but apart from that Nature looks very fresh and beautiful.

"Upon the whole, however, I shall be glad when I am

back in Florence again. The city has a great fascination for me. And I have far more personal liberty there than here; everywhere here are high stone walls that shut out the property from the highroads. This insures privacy but it confines one within a certain limit which I find to be very depressing and personally annoying. I like to wander, as I do in America over hill and dale and through fields and valley, but I cannot do it here at all without coming plump against a wall nine feet high. Some of the roads are very picturesque, but they do not take the place of the quiet fertility of nature. . . .”

As one can see from the foregoing extracts, there were times when he felt to the full the charms of Italy; those were days when he might almost be said to have regained his youthful zest. But these were the exceptions. Depression was continually seizing him; he could work but little, and idleness was so strange to him that he found it unpleasant. Then to add disappointment to his physical difficulties, he found that the architects from whom he was expecting contracts were either placing them in other hands or deciding not to use mural decorations. This was a terrific blow, for not only had he planned the Italian trip largely to further the painting of those pictures, but also he was depending to a certain extent upon the funds with which they would provide him. Everything seemed to be conspiring to make him unhappy.

After leaving San Domenico, he spent a few weeks in Siena, where he was comparatively well. But on his return from Florence he had a sharp bilious attack, which left him in a much more serious condition than he had been before,

and which hastened his death, which occurred a few days later, on November 9, 1911.

He had accomplished, however, his greatest mission in life: he had been instrumental, along with Abbey, Frost, and others of his early comrades, in raising the illustrative art in America to a level which had been hitherto unknown. He had by the consummate artistry of his own creative work and by the energy of his teaching helped to lift it from the tawdry commonplaceness in which he had found it in 1876 to the flowering beauty in which he left it in 1911. But in another field he had done more, and perhaps without so much conscious effort. Any child whose early years have been colored by the *Robin Hood* or *The Wonder Clock* or *Men of Iron* will not soon forget the pleasure which Howard Pyle has afforded him. The name of the author of *Robin Hood* should be written high upon the roll of those whom children love.

Nothing could be more fitting in conclusion than the closing words of Henry Mills Alden's glowing tribute to him as they appeared in an edition of *Harper's Magazine* soon after his death.

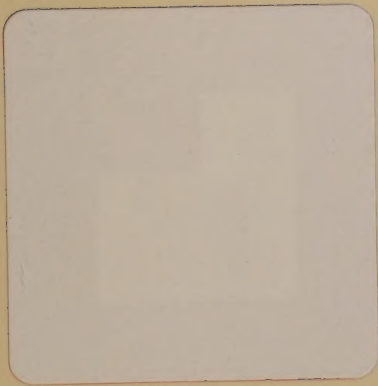
"Pyle . . . was first of all and always an illustrator. Because he was transcendently that, he was something more than that, especially in his sense and handling of color and in the spirit which animated and informed his creations. He never failed to give his meaning in the picture itself, whether illustration or mural painting; but he delighted in correlating his meanings by means of the written story, which was always virile, significant, and charmingly antique and idiomatic.

"His work as author and artist was, for us all, and a good

part of it especially for youth, a fresh revival of the Romantic. But, though it occupied the field of wonder, it had no Rossetti-like transfiguration and exaltation, no vagueness. Without any loss of wonder, his meanings were plain. We shall not see his like again."



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